

REVERSING BEHAVIORS OF IRRESPONSIBLE SPIRITUAL
PARENTHOOD: A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL
FOR NEW CHURCH PLANTS

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ABSTRACT

REVERSING BEHAVIORS OF IRRESPONSIBLE SPIRITUAL PARENTHOOD: A DISCIPLESHIP MODEL FOR NEW CHURCH PLANTS

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This project focuses on the need for a wholesome environment at Perfecting Love Community Church that supports authentic Christian discipleship. This form of discipleship is identified as being synonymous with parenting in the spiritual and church arena. The purpose of this project is to provide a model for new church plants that challenges the church body to collectively fulfill the responsibility of discipleship, development, accountability, and growth. This project proved with the implementation of this discipleship model, the trends of irresponsible behaviors demonstrated in new church plants will be reversed. The findings within this project were validated through data triangulation.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to Sharonda K. Mitchell, the spouse of the researcher. Throughout this journey, you have provided your prayers, support and constructive criticism to ensure the completion of this project. This project would not have been completed if it were not for your understanding and patience the many times spent away from home. The seed you have sown into the life of this ministry work is greatly appreciated.

This project is also dedicated to Jade Sharee Mitchell, the daughter of the researcher. When this journey began you had only experienced one year of life. Over the past three years this relationship of love inspired the necessary focus to complete this project. This relationship of love also served as constant reminders of the great responsibility spiritual parents have to the children of God. Thank you for simply being you.

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of this discipleship model for new church plants was birthed out the life experiences of the author. The need for this assignment to be fulfilled is relevant to the continued success of the church. Unfortunately, there are far too many occasions in which individuals in the body of Christ are looking for a place to worship that supports the teachings of the Word of God only to realize the place in which they placed membership is no different than a country club. The author shares this experience and with the help of God, the research and field study conducted in this project will illuminate a healthy discipleship process in which new church plants can grow into viable ministries.

Since the beginning of humanity, God empowered humankind to have dominion over the entire earth. Along with the great power that was bestowed upon the human race came the responsibility of providing for, nurturing, and developing the many gifts that were given by God. Even after the original fall of humankind, God graciously allowed the human race to still remain the dominant force of the earth. Before the error of humankind created imperfections in the human race, the responsibility that people shared did not consist of caring for other human beings. This particular error produced the introduction of parents to the earth.

Throughout time the role and responsibility of parenting has progressed into the spiritual arena. As a result, the pastoral leadership of the church has assumed the role of

spiritual parents. The human race has a traceable history of demonstrating irresponsible behaviors that prevents quality growth within the Christian community. Consequently, the maturation of the children of God is stunted by the behaviors of spiritual leadership from the pulpit. The Perfecting Love Community Church (PLCC) is a new church plant that targets the adoption of victims of this church abuse and spiritual parental negligence.

There are several reasons why new church plants struggle. This project encompasses many of the challenges in which the new church plants suffer from and provides solutions to avoid the ever growing cycle of church closures. The primary focus within the project is the responsibility of the pastor to the parishioners and the parishioners to the pastor. The author highlights the importance of accountability and spiritual maturity. Many churches attempt to create a wholesome environment for the people, but instead become sidetracked by trends of religion. As a result, new church plants easily become a replica of the churches that know how to participate in the exercises of worship without being able to demonstrate the power of God.

This project proves that when the people church are held accountable to fulfilling the responsibility of spiritual parenting, the irresponsible behaviors in the church will be reversed and the trends of abuse will be erased through the discipleship of God's love being perfected in God's people. This project specifically focuses on the context of PLCC. The research conducted in this project exemplifies the passion of the author to ensure that PLCC is a ministry that is built on nurturing God's children in a way that produces spiritual maturity.

Chapter one, Ministry Focus, uncovers the researcher's life and how it connects to this body of work. It is through the experiences in which the author shares that has

birthed this passion for spiritual maturation. This chapter connects the moments in which God has moved in the life of the writer and how that intersects with the context in which he serves. This chapter will demonstrate several instances that proved to be training ground for the author in preparation of leading God's people into authentic discipleship practices.

Chapter two, The State of the Art in the Ministry Model, inspects several pieces of relevant literature that speaks to the importance of discipleship models for new church plants. This chapter also explores scholarly literature that examines the need for ministries that are accountable from the pulpit to the pews.

Chapter three, Theoretical Foundations, establish the biblical and theological relevance of this project. The author provides a thorough examination of Old and New Testament scriptures that support the need for effective spiritual parenting. In addition, this chapter will provide an exchange between the author and theologians that delivers validity to the overall findings of this project.

Chapter four, Methodology, is the researcher's process of examination for this project. Through qualitative action research the writer was able to implement this discipleship methodology. The use of pre and post-test of a bible study series, testimonials, and surveys allowed the writer to triangulate the data.

Chapter five, Field Experience, outlines the results and analysis of a ten week study. This chapter contains the success and proof of growth and effective discipleship. The writer also provides the steps of replicating this model for implementation.

Chapter six, Reflection, Summary, and Conclusion, the information shared in this chapter enable the author the opportunity to transfer the overall appreciation of the

experience. It is in this chapter the author relays how the author has grown in this process. Here the author also shares lessons learned and better ways of implementing this model to the reader.

All supporting documentation for this project can be located in the appendix section.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Spiritual Autobiography

Now the word of the Lord came to me saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” Then I said, “Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.” But the Lord said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a boy’; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.”¹

The journey of life for the writer, Jason Antwan Mitchell, began in Memphis, Tennessee. Jason is the fourth and final child, all boys, to his parents. As a result of being the youngest child, Jason was tagged with the nickname Baby Boy by his mother. Considering the reality that nobody else called him by that nickname, this was more of a connection that was created early in life by a mother and the special love she has for her youngest miracle son. Jason’s parents were united in marriage in 1971. Their union produced children that were separated by eight years combined. Now, according to his parents and brothers, Jason was not planned. However, preventative measures were not taken either.

The life of Jason tells a story that covers many different peaks and valleys in a very short time. The events that he experienced from his family are what shaped his view

¹Je. 1:4-8 (NRSV).

of God and the Church. The interaction between Jason and his parents, siblings, and extended family provided a foundation that at times proves to be very strong and at other times needs to be demolished and rebuilt.

The history of Jason's parents is very thought-provoking. Jason's mother was part of a family that produced eight children. His grandmother was always known for caring for others. It would be tough to imagine that she was anything other than the perfect role model and child of God to young Jason and others. It was sitting in her bedroom that Jason received Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior at the age of five. His grandmother communicated to him that he was going to die one day. Jason was too young to handle that, but she did not leave him at that place of darkness. She quickly taught on Heaven and Hell. After she explained the plan of salvation in a way a child could understand it, Jason was sure that he was saved and was going to Heaven. This example of truth would serve as a seed sown in the ministry of the author.

Even though things appeared to be wonderful in the extended family, it was when Jason began to mature in age and wisdom that he realized that the perfect image of family was indeed flawed. Through curious research inspired by an inquisitive child which was based completely on observations that did not line up with the lessons being taught, Jason uncovered that his grandfather, his mother's father, was not the father of all eight of his grandmother's children. It was around this moment in history that Jason realized that all his aunts and uncles were the product of three different men.

Confusion was now being created because Jason had thought all this time that his grandfather was the father of all his aunts and uncles. This was primarily due to the fact that all of his grandmother's children addressed the grandfather as their dad or father.

Ultimately, his mother was teaching her children to embrace family despite the circumstances. On the contrary, out of anger Jason thought they were being taught how to cover many lies. Unfortunately, that created a world of confusion in regards to loyalty and relationship. As a result, Jason's mother often setup many occasions for all her children to know and love all their relatives. This is when Jason learned that true love covers a multitude of sin.² She eliminated as many distractions of love as she could in an effort to preserve hope that we can have successful homes, even if the people that we see as parents fail to demonstrate that love in a practical fashion.

The writer's father's family history is more of a mystery. Jason and the rest of his family attended many family reunions all over the country to celebrate the Mitchell name. From California to Georgia, to South Carolina, to Memphis; every summer for at least five consecutive years the Mitchell family got together to do everything. Everything can be defined in this context as being a combination of wholesome acts of family love and the cloud of smoke that covers areas that will always remain grey. Jason can recall times in which he spent countless hours with this side of his family, but unfortunately he was more connected to his mother's side. Maybe this had a lot to do with the fact that though his parents were married, they truly had grown apart after the test of time.

The Mitchell family had the reputation of unsuccessful marriages and dysfunctional homes. The home that was established by the author's parents was no different. During the early stages of Jason's life, he felt happy just to bloviate the reality that his mother and father were married and lived in the same house. Not to mention, Jason's father was a Baptist Pastor. Jason made the assumption that this was the life. He

²1 Pt 4:8.

was overwhelmingly wrong. It did not matter that his father was a Pastor and three of his father's brothers were Pastors. Something was clearly wrong this this side of the family too.

Jason eventually woke up from this dream world and was brought back to reality. When the dream ended, Jason noticed some different actions. It was abundantly clear that something was different when he recognized his father stop coming home around five years old. This was the time in Jason's life that a major shift took place. He learned that he had a brother that was three years younger than he was and a sister older than all of his older brothers. Both of these children were by two different women. To make matters worse, his father was a representative of the pulpit. The shame that was brought on the family was unreal.

Jason was protected from a lot of the real life situations that took place in the home. If it was not his oldest brother, his mother always covered Jason's eyes so that the moments of infidelity, lies, deceit, and physical abuse would not have a lasting impact on him. When Jason turned eight he was told that it was official. His mother had divorced her husband and children's father. It was at that moment when another divorce took place. Ultimately, the children were divorcing their father as well in an indirect fashion. Not Jason though. Jason continued to hold out hope that one day, with God's help, this dysfunctional house can be restored. He truly believed that God could do anything. The reality is Jason always trusted that his father would be a man of his word, but he never came through the way Jason anticipated. Jason would be left to trust his biological brothers to teach him the process of becoming a man. He never made the connection or

comparison between God, The Father, and his biological father. Jason only saw God as The Creator and Savior.

Jason and his three older brothers are very close. In the three bedroom house they grew up in, all they had was time and opportunity to become close. Their mother obviously occupied one room. The other two rooms were designated for the older boys to have one room and the younger boys to have the other room. There was no such thing as privacy, but who truly had privacy in the home of a scorned woman and mother determined to make better men out of her boys than her husband was.

When it came down to the interaction of the boys, the younger brothers spent the most time together because of common interests. This was the moment when the disconnection was revealed between the oldest brother and the younger brothers. Due to the fact that he was four, six, and eight years older than his younger brothers; they just were not cool enough to hang out with him in his opinion. Besides, the writer's oldest brother was forced to be a co-disciplinarian. They were close, but they accepted the fact that the oldest sibling was probably not going to be around as much.

One of the reasons the author's parents struggled in the home is because of the parenting strategies that were applied to the oldest child. The writer learned that his parents struggled with the verbal insults and accusations that their oldest son demonstrated female mannerisms. While the mother came to the defense of her oldest son, the father was ashamed to address this issue. Jason's mother was hurting and looking for the man she exchanged vows with to step in and be the leader of the home. While the author's father made the choice to neglect the responsibility of parental guidance,

discipline and love; the author witnessed his mother providing the solution covering her oldest son, in love.

Jason did not know what was going on with his eldest brother and his father. He knew something was different, but never questioned it. As a result, Jason became more engaged and interactive with other siblings. Like most boys they got in trouble a lot. The lack of maturity was demonstrated daily. They were far from little angels. They did things they should not have done. Jason was always trying to be like his older brothers. They created healthy competition in sports, music, and in the classroom. A strong bond was established between the writer and his brothers because of how they viewed friendship and relationships. The relationship that was created by Jason and his brothers was the measuring stick for all other relationships that he considered. It did not matter if it was socially, spiritually, or professionally. Jason experience with loyalty and accountability was demonstrated by the relationship with his brothers. There was only one occasion that Jason did not want to be like his brothers and that is when they got in trouble because the wrath of their mother was no joking matter.

Now, Jason did not mind mirroring his brothers when they got away with mischievous acts. However, whether it came by switch (a disciplinary device created from the limbs of bushes), belt, extension cord, or the natural heavy hand/fist; they never wanted to experience their mother's wrath. The author's mother was a firm disciplinarian. She was sure to install in her children biblical principles that supported growth. This was a lesson that was sometimes very painful. In these moments of discipline, the author would often hear of how this form of love was necessary to promote growth.

The relationship that Jason had with his mother was special. He was the only one of the boys that always seemed to travel with his mother outside of church. When she went to the grocery store, she took Jason. When she visited the sick, she took Jason. When she went to see relatives, Jason was attached to her by the hip. It wasn't that he was the favored child, because his mother loves all her children equally. It could have a lot to do with the reality that this miracle child almost lost his life twice. At the age of eleven months, Jason was diagnosed with H Flu Meningitis, which is the worst form of meningitis. This illness is an inflammation of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord. The inflammation is by infection with viruses, bacteria, or other microorganisms. This illness can be fatal and doctors reported that Jason might not make it. The illness is so rare that it only occurs in less than two and 100,000 children. One day Jason's mother noticed that he wasn't talking or playing as much as he was accustomed to doing. She went to check him out and noticed that he was completely stiff. Jason was awake and breathing, but could not move. He was rushed to the emergency room only to have several tests ran on him. At this moment Jason could only be viewed through a glass with many tubes coming from his body. Jason's mother believes that it was God that saved her son and gave her the wisdom to respond quickly to his situation. Even though he had to learn to walk all over again, Jason survived this attack of Satan. That was just the first scare.

The second brush with death came just before the divorce of his parents and on one of Jason's birthdays. Jason had been given a Big Wheel tricycle. This was a very popular toy and many children desired to have the toy. Here was a rare occasion in which Jason was given something that not many people had in his neighborhood and also

something that was not passed down to him. Most times Jason was on the other end, desiring to have something that other children had. Well, Jason went outside to take his Big Wheel for a ride. This exuberant moment for Jason would not last long. Once he turned the corner and headed down the street on the sidewalk, Jason was ran over by a car backing out of a driveway. The driver of the vehicle obviously did not see Jason. Hearing the Big Wheel dragging behind the car and being crushed, the driver pulled back into the driveway; consequently running over Jason again. There he was lying motionless in the street. For fear the driver went back into his house and did nothing according to one witness. Jason recalls the story of seeing daylight and without warning complete darkness. He remembers starring at the bottom of the vehicle and being very afraid.

While being under that car he remembered the conversation between him and his grandmother about Heaven. When he thought about that moment of salvation and Heaven under that car, the darkness he saw became light again. The car was gone and once again, Jason was in a situation in which he laid motionless. This time it was the aid of two Good Samaritan women that were driving down the street and stopped to see about the child. The two women pick Jason up and asked him if he was okay. Jason thought he was dead and was looking for what his grandmother had just shared with him about Heaven not that long ago. After realizing he was not dead he told the two women that he was fine and that he lived in the house on the corner. They took him back to his mother and told her what happened. Jason's mother rushed him to the hospital yet again only to be told this time that Jason was fine.

Jason walked away from this brush with death with on a scratch on his head. His mother was full of joy and relieved that Jason survived once again. Maybe his mother felt

like there was something worth preserving in this child. Jason had two escapes from death that are worth evaluating life and saying there must be something special about this child. So Jason stayed close to his mother. At this point of life, Jason biggest adult influences were women. This was confusing for him because in the traditional Baptist Church in which he grew up in, women were not recognized as equals.

The person that exemplified the image of God's Spirit was his mother. The person that responded to saving his life was his mother. The person that walked him through the plan of salvation was his grandmother. When he was run over by a car, he was picked up by two women. It was no surprised that even at a young age Jason begin to support the women of God and their ability to be used by God for God's Kingdom work. Jason has always believed that the man should be in a place of authority, but that is not permission to treat a woman as if they are insignificant, unable, or question the Calling of God to do the work of God.

The way, in which Jason and his brothers were raised by their mother, they were often provided the example of how to give honor to the Lord. They were in church five to six days a week. They lived so close to the church that they often walked to and from church. The pastor of this church was the brother of their father. He is known simply as Reverend or Uncle to the Mitchell boys. Reverend is the man that ordained their father and referred him to the church that he served as pastor. Though the Mitchell story and history is very much a cloud of mystery, Jason always wondered what his Uncle thought about this brother. However, it was because of the values that Jason's mother began to plant in her children that caused them to not hate their father or the extended Mitchell family. Instead she taught them love, forgiveness, and restoration. Even though infidelity

cost their father his marriage, their mother stressed to them that it did not have to cost him his relationship with his children. As a result they were taught valuable lessons as young children that ultimately developed two of them into the ministry, three that are married, three with children (none out of wedlock), none on drugs, and all saved and sure about their personal salvation.

Even though their father has made the choice not to be involved in their lives, it is not because the door was closed by the children. His mother demonstrated to her boys what to look for in a woman. More importantly, she taught her boys how to treat a woman. From the pain and agony that she experienced, her children were able to watch her channel her energy into creating four strong, mature, real men. She was a firm believer in training up a child in the way they should go, and when they are old they will not depart from it.³ Like a wild animal to her offspring, the author's mother was willing to fight for the safety, training, and discipline of her children. She recognizes that she is far from perfect. She has demonstrated the boldness of one's testimony by truly being transparent. She has no shame in sharing how God has delivered her from many acts of unrighteousness. The blessing is how she continues to strive for God in her daily walk and attempt to lead others to the one and only perfect God.

Education

By the time Jason reached high school, he was about ready to shake the little brother syndrome. The little brother syndrome is defined by the writer as when nobody knows the younger sibling's name and always identifying the younger sibling by the

³Pt 22:6.

relationship of the older brother. This frustrated Jason so that he decided he was not going to participate in any of the same activities of his older brothers. Instead Jason played golf and studied to work in the medical field as a nursing assistant.

At the age of fourteen the writer spent time working at the Regional Medical Center Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. This job was a part of the writer's cooperative learning. Instead of getting paid with money, his success on the job was rewarded with a letter grade. His labor and medical training was in the Post Trauma Unit. This was an important period in Jason's life. Without direction as to what career he wanted to pursue after his secondary education, the writer was almost certain that this experience in the hospital was the first step to preparing himself in the promising field of medicine. All that changed on one particular day in which Jason became attached to one of his patients that suffered a massive heart attack.

The patient was in the hospital due to a broken arm. Scheduled to go home in two days, without warning, Code Blue was echoed over the hospital. All available response team doctors were commissioned to the Post Trauma ward. The writer stood there watching as they attempted over and over to revive this patient and new acquaintance. The struggle became so great that the team of doctors ordered the door be closed as family members began to come in. Multiple people were becoming emotional and yet the doctors needed uninterrupted time in an attempt to save this patient. Finally, the door opened. The lead response doctor was the first to come out. The family had already been asked to gather in the family room. The doctor announced to the team of nurses and nursing assistants to inform the family that the patient had expired after several attempts of restoration.

This was the first time that Jason experienced death face to face. Jason had attended funerals and had two encounters close personal encounters with death, but this was when the message registered. The writer learned that death can show up at any moment regardless to how great one may feel. This is the time in which the scripture that encourages all to be ready became significant for Jason. Some may argue that, no child should have been in that situation. However, this life changing moment help shape the identity of this young man.

As Jason went through high school, he continued to find his way. By the time Jason was in the tenth grade he had established his own identity. On most occasions, he was always taking the lead to see to it that many of the trips were planned out effectively and approved by the school administration and the Memphis Board of Education. This leadership experience helped paved the way for Jason to successfully run and become elected to serve as the West Tennessee Vice-President of the Tennessee Association Health Occupations Students of America, Choir President, Golf Team Captain, and Senior Class President.

The writer was moving up very fast. People all over the school knew him and respected his leadership. Unfortunately, Jason was lacking an accountability system. His brother was gone to college and most students typically took his lead and never challenged his authority or questioned his decisions. This situation would prove to be a lifelong lesson in leadership.

As Jason served as Senior Class President, he was all about making respectable decisions for the students that elected him. The pressure was on from the beginning. Jason was the third Mitchell boy to become elected Senior Class President. He also had

beat out three of the most popular students in the school to obtain this office. As he demonstrated successful leadership to implement programs and activities that excited the majority of the Senior Class, he began to get celebrated more than he was ready to handle. One day, Jason decided that he was going to host a party in the office that he was given as a privilege to occupy during his senior year by the principal of the school as the class president.

The year was about three quarters complete and Jason wanted an early celebration for a successful run in leadership. This party was to be held during school hours while class was in session. His office was on one of the main halls in the school. On the other wall of his office was the school library. The people who were invited to this party were not people that cared to tell Jason this party was not a good idea. They never questioned his decisions and always did whatever he said do. Jason was eventually confronted by the senior class advisor, had the key to his office taken from him, and had a mandatory meeting setup with the school principal. For the first time in Jason's life he was placed in a situation where the male figure demonstrated headship. Jason did not avoid the demonstration of corporal punishment. He actually expected it considering the house he came from. However, what he did not expect was his principal to educate him on leadership and discipline. He taught Jason the importance of effective leadership, keeping records, and maintaining integrity. More importantly, he taught Jason to always keep people around you that can respectfully and tactfully question your decisions to ensure that you are not making decisions that could bring destruction.

This was new for Jason. He had never had an adult male to break it down to him in this fashion. He reminded Jason to always stay humble and never abuse your authority

and power. The principal was building the writer up. He did not crush Jason and leave him to be walked over and embarrassed. He dealt with Jason on a personal and one-on-one level. Jason did not have to suffer the massive embarrassment of his faults, but he was warned. That was a seed of wisdom that was planted that had produced much fruit.

Upon graduation, Jason went on to LeMoyne-Owen College (LOC). He became an exceptional student. He was able to have a moment of redemption as he was elected to several leadership positions and given a lot of perks in these positions. The highlight position Jason obtained is the highest position a student can hold at LOC. Not only was Jason elected to this position, he was the first ever underclassman to be elected as Student Government Association President in the school's history. With this opportunity to redeem himself, Jason was determined to leave a mark on the college campus of LOC. Some of the promises that Jason made was to improve the safety conditions for current and future students, challenge the administration to hear the voices of the students regularly, and assist with advancing the school technologically.

Jason was given a bigger and better office than in high school. Not to mention his office was very secluded and in the student center. He could have gotten away with throwing as many parties as he wanted to, but there was a seed that had taken root and was prepared to produce a harvest. This was not the case for Jason when he first went to college. That seed needed to be watered. Once again, another male figure was there to put water on that seed that was planted back in high school. God would grant the increase.

Jason's advisor was there to stop the writer from making an immature decision. Jason told his advisor to put him on a five year graduation plan because he wanted to take his time and enjoy the total college experience. Jason's mentor called the request stupid

and challenged him not to lie to himself or his advisor again. His mentor, who happened to be a pastor, was able to read Jason like an open book. He explained to Jason that he could do everything he needed to do in four years. This was the first male pastor that Jason witnessed demonstrating true authority and accountability. There was a major shift taking place in Jason's life. This was some much needed water for the seeds that were planted by his high school principal.

Upon graduating from LOC in 2005 with a Bachelors of Business Administration, Jason went on pursue his Masters of Arts and Religion degree from Memphis Theological Seminary. He successfully completed this degree program in 2007. He was encouraged to attend this particular institution by one of his fraternity brothers who was also in the ministry. For the first time he was challenged to get an education to support his walk in Christ. It was at this moment that the writer realized that in all his life, nobody from the church had ever encouraged Christian education. When Jason evaluated his interaction with clergy over the course of his life, all his interaction seem to lead to people being called, but had no training. This revelation for the writer caused him to begin to question members of clergy, especially those that did not have any theological training or education.

Jason would ask the question, why would someone seek medical attention from an uneducated physician? The argument that the writer was looking to prove is that even though one could have the desire and calling to be a medical physician, in is inadvisable for that untrained prospect of medicine to operate on a person who requires surgery. In the life of ministry and Christian education, this seems to be the only profession that will allow untrained individuals to operate or practice on patient without training. Jason

pursuit of biblical training was a journey of purpose to become educated to fulfill the development of the calling on his life.

The writer was not complete with his education. Considering the fact that he enjoyed and had a passion for business, Jason enrolled at Dowling College in Oakdale, New York to complete the Master of Business Administration degree program. Jason was able to attend this program at the expense of his employer. He completed the Master of Business Administration degree in one and a half years. The faculty was so impressed with the writer's work ethic that he was asked to speak at his graduation. Jason had demonstrated tremendous growth. This was a humbling experience for Jason. He was given favor with the institution. Often times he was able to minister to various members of the faculty when calling to discuss registration for his classes for the next semester. Not taking the moments for granted, the writer used these random opportunities as times to reflect on and demonstrate the power of God with random people.

Jason found himself having prayer with and for members of the faculty. He also was blessed to have individuals recognized the anointing on his life that they felt comfortable in trusting the writer to share what he believed God was saying regarding each individual's situation. While these were conversations that should not have been going on, Jason was bold enough to trust God and the lives of God's people were blessed due to the fact the writer was not ashamed to allow God to use him. This boldness that Jason displayed would prove to be vital in Jason taking the step to follow the Spirit of God in his personal ministry endeavors. Jason eventually enrolled in the Doctor of

Ministry Program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. This experience and journey for the writer is what helped him to connect all the dots in his life to his specific assignment.

Relationships

Inspired and motivated by his mother and father's relationship, Jason was determined to find a wife in order to have a good thing and get favor from the Lord. More importantly, he wanted to prove that there are still real Christian men of character that exist and take care of their homes. After what his biological father demonstrated through his childhood years, Jason wanted to be a part of a model of successful marriage so that people would have an example to reference.

Jason met his soon to be wife back when they were in high school. They were really good friends. They sang in the choir together, went to the same college together, and attended the same church together. They were just great friends to one another. Jason had great respect for her gift of song and she had great respect for Jason gift to orate the Word of God under the anointing of God. Their relationship did not require the period of getting to know one another. The two knew each other and was already acquainted with each other's families. Once Jason asked her to be his wife, it was no surprise. The surprise was that Jason asked her on a date. She was not sure how to take because they always joked around in high school, college and around church that they were going to get married. It seems as though it was already ordained by God, but they never saw it.

Out of respect, Jason asked her mother if he could have her blessing to marry her daughter. The blessing was granted. The couple was engaged in the summer of 2006. Jason vowed it would not be a long engagement period. However, Jason did stress the

importance marital counseling. He did not care how long they were friends; they never lived with one another or have experience in marriage. As a matter of fact, they were bringing the history of failed marriages into their home. This was a curse that needed to be broken. Jason's mother had been divorced once. Jason's father had been with at least three women in which he had children. Jason's grandmother had three different fathers to her eight children. The author's fiancé's mother had two failed marriages as well. The hope that this future couple had in God was the fact that her grandparents were married and lived a very long life together. They had issues, but staying married wasn't one of them. As a result this couple was very committed to destroying any curses that could lurk into their home. The marriage counseling was not what they were hoping to receive. It was not in depth. In fact it was somewhat cookie cutter.

The counseling did not really go beneath the surface. Therefore, the couple sought out additional counseling. The additional counseling came from other married couples that were saved and had experience in the destruction of curses. As a result, they were able to uncover some issues before they were married in which they were able to target strategies on how to attack the issues as they strived for marital bliss.

The couple acknowledged the fact they are not perfect, but can help each other through accountability to be effective in marriage and other personal goals. They intently merged their two wills into one and got on one accord very early on in their life. This was going on before they actually got married. They decided that they would be honest with one another and tell as much about their pasts as they could remember to eliminate any surprises. They discussed every relationship, debt, credit, health, and anything else they thought would help them have a successful marriage. They were scheduled to get married

on seventh day of July in 2007. However, they moved the wedding up to twenty-eighth day of April during the same year because there was no need to force each other to wait any longer on what God ordained, constructed and organized. They were on the same page and began practicing before that day how to be best friends.

On October of 2010 at 11:31 P.M. God blessed this couple with five pound ten ounce baby girl. Jason's mother was probably the happiest because she had all boys and this was her first daughter. The couple shares a dual passion to be better parents than their biological fathers were. There is special incentive and motivation for Jason to better man and father.

Ministry

Jason joined the Church of God in Christ in 2001 at the age of eighteen. His reasoning for joining this congregation was to be challenged in the Word and break away from his home church. The church that he grew up in was established by family. Now that Jason has reached a point of adulthood, he was searching for place he was not considered a child. The situation for Jason had progressively become so bad spiritually that he would leave out of service to watch television in the back, especially during the football season. Since he had a strong desire to learn and be challenged by the Word of God, Jason began to search for a new church home. After visiting many churches, Jason eventually was led to join the Church of God in Christ.

This particular ministry was a perfect fit for Jason at the time of his development and growth. The church was small, pastor was accessible, and there were other lay members that Jason could identify with. Jason immediately got active in the church. The writer felt as though the pastor was very engaging and interested in Jason's personal

development. After much growth Jason heard the voice of God calling him into the ministry to preach the Gospel. Jason did not care to preach and told God he did not care to preach. It is often mentioned of Jason that he told God that he would be a good church deacon and non-Hell raising saint. He believed in supporting leadership according the Word and thought that was the perfect life him. Jason did not like having his name called in church. Jason did not care to sit up front. All Jason wanted was the opportunity to grow spiritually, fellowship with his brothers and sisters in Christ, fulfill the vision of the leader, and serve wherever he could.

After the calling was announced, for a full year Jason sat under his pastor before preaching his first sermon. On the nineteenth day of September in 2005, Jason preached from the topic, Will the Real Saints Please Stand Up. This sermon was a reflection of the authority in the ministry that Jason recognized in the very beginning. The confirmation of the calling the God had on his life was when Jason was lead to 2 Timothy 4:2. Jason received that God was calling him to be a preacher that was bold enough to stand before the people and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Through humble and tenacious service, he was then appointed Youth Minister on January first of 2005 and licensed on April third during the same year by his pastor. In August of 2009, he was ordained as an Elder in the Church of God in Christ. Within the Church of God in Christ the office of an Elder is equal to the office of a pastor.

The challenge came for Jason in ministry when he did not get the spiritual father that he was looking for in ministry. Due to the fact that Jason has always desired to have that father figure, he anticipated that after he accepted his calling that the relationship with his pastor would become more engaging. It was not that Jason's pastor was absent in

his life. Jason's pastor was very present and available, but Jason was looking to have a void filled that was empty from the home. Due to the fact that Jason and his pastor's relationship continued to be more of on the job training, Jason simply accepted the relationship as it was and looked to his spiritual brothers for accountability, development and strength. This was something he was used to anyway. He never made a big deal about not having ministerial training sessions. Jason may have only sat down three or four times with his pastor to discuss where Jason was in ministry or to what extent has God dealt with Jason regarding the development of the ministry. The typical response Jason received was that he was always being watched. There were never any feedback sessions or talks of guidance regarding Jason's personal ministry and development. The overall message that Jason received was if nothing is said from the head, everything is all good.

While this may have been fine for some people, that was not the case for Jason. Maybe Jason is to blame. He never said anything. Whenever he attempted to schedule meetings of trainings with the ministerial staff, there was never any time. So most training sessions were handled on Sunday morning during the worship celebration. The message of warning was to always be prepared. None of the preachers knew when they would be called upon to preach or conduct a specific piece of the church service. Jason was always favored by God. When the pastor would leave town, he would leave Jason in charge. When the pastor got sick on Sunday morning, he would leave Jason in charge. Jason was definitely favored by God and the pastor, but Jason desired more from the person that called him his son in the ministry.

When Jason received the calling to pastor, he was very hesitant to talk to his pastor about it. The pastor had already lost his physical son and now he was about to lose his spiritual son. Jason's time at this church after ten years was all but over. Jason realized that he was not to remain at this church any longer because his vision for ministry was different than that of the pastor's. However, when Jason finally talked to his pastor he received his blessing, a seed offering, and told it was time to go because a house cannot have two fathers. This caught Jason by surprise. Especially considering the fact that Jason requested time to share the vision and get feedback and guidance. Jason's feedback was summed up in three words, it looks good. That was it. There was no hug, no statement of approval or any form of emotion. It was still business.

The author was given a date of release and date to start the new church. This is when Jason stood up and stood his ground. Jason explained to his pastor that he was not sure why he announced to the church we were starting three weeks from that date the announcement was made. If Jason was to follow that time period, he would have launched the ministry on the third Sunday of November in 2011. Instead, Jason reminded his pastor that in the vision that he said, looks good, was instructed by God to launch in 2012. Jason stated that they will use that time as a release date, but Jason and his wife would serve until that time.

Jason committed himself to fulfilling the vision that was placed in his heart. In November 2007, while sitting in a classroom at Memphis Theological Seminary, Jason heard the Spirit of God speak Perfecting Love. Not knowing what this meant, he went into prayer and was led, by God, to read the fourth chapter of the first epistle of John. While reading this particular passage of scripture, God began to reveal a new assignment

to him. It was at this moment when God revealed the office of pastor. After he heard God speak these words, he did not receive this assignment. Due to the uncertainty of this vision and assignment, Jason dismissed the notion that he would serve as a pastor. Therefore, he continued to serve in his local ministry as Youth Minister and as an evangelist across the country.

In 2009, the Spirit of God began to remind him of the new assignment again. The words, perfecting love resurfaced. This time Jason began to seek the face of God for confirmation, clarity, and direction. While consecrating himself before the Lord, God spoke a word of confirmation to Jason that he would serve as an end time Pastor. This was so overwhelming that Jason became uncomfortable with the weight of this tremendous assignment. The reality of knowing the magnitude of the ministry in which God would birth out of him was very humbling. God then planted the seed of Perfecting Love Community Church (PLCC). Jason received the planting of this seed from God.

The confirmation was given and the clarity was granted. The next step was direction. In order to ensure that the birth of this ministry was successful, Jason began to prepare the way for the Lord. The instructions from God were to “write the vision and make it plain; so they that read it can understand it and run with it.”⁴ The most important message that came from God at this time was that the vision is for an appointed time. This message was very vital to the establishment of this ministry because Jason did not want to birth this ministry prematurely. Therefore, he continued to study under training and prepared himself for this great assignment.

⁴Heb 2:2.

Context of Ministry Focus

Perfecting Love Community Church

PLCC was successfully launched on February 12, 2012. God blessed with over three hundred people who came out to support the launching of this ministry. During the first official Sunday morning worship celebration, the ministry took in fourteen members. These fourteen people would be defined as the charter members of the church. One of the highlights of the service was when Pastor Jason told the people that he was in no way intimidated by the anointing on the life of his wife. He was sure to let the people know that he supports the gifts in his wife and any others who God has gifted to serve in this ministry.

Running With Vision

The theme scripture of PLCC is from 1 John 4:12. In this text it is identified that if the people of God love one another, God will live in the people. In addition to God living in the people, God also affirms the love of God will be perfected in the people. This is genesis of the vision of PLCC. As a result God provided the vision of PLCC to be the place where imperfect people strive for God's perfect love. The mission of the church is to demonstrate the true spirit of God's love by restoring, developing, and completing all mankind through the infallible written Word of God in preparation for the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The problem in new church plants is the large percentage of undisciplined longtime church attendees joining the church which can have an adverse effect on the ministry due to the lack of spiritual training and development. This is often the case in the greater Memphis area; specifically the context in which PLCC is located. The city of Memphis,

Tennessee is unique in many ways. In the mist of great moments of history produced by Memphis through the years, it is equally documented that Memphis has experienced significant lows. The low points of Memphis are the moments that have hindered the potential growth that is available for this city and its citizens. When making observations of Memphis' potential from a spiritual lens, it is possible that many could justifiably characterize this city in a common expression of rhetoric that asks the question, is the glass half empty or half full?

Considering this thought of rhetoric, the answer that should always arise to the surface must consist of a hope. Are there any believers who can confidently proclaim there is still hope for the city of Memphis to emerge from the valley of the shadows of death despite all of the racial, economic, social, and ecumenical struggles that have plagued the city of Memphis? Or, has the city become so low that the glass appears half empty and headed for becoming null and void? The information and facts that the author has researched and uncovered will display the reality that with God all things are possible. There is an abundance of opportunity for the city of Memphis to flourish spiritually.

Before a solution can be provided in any situation, it is apparent the problem must be defined. Within the city of Memphis many of the problems that have risen concerning the Christian community are simply because of the racial divide. The racial issues have unfortunately spread into the government, academic institutions, and even the places of worship. It is very unfortunate to uncover despite the professed Christian community representing the majority of the city's religious population, Sunday morning is the most

segregated hour of day. It is the belief of the author that the genesis of this divide can be traced to the history of this city.

The current status of this problem is a work in progress. While there are many organizations and churches in the Christian community actively involved in the process of spiritual reconciliation, there is yet a mountainous divide that still remains and appears to be unmoved. So the challenge that is addressed within the context of the author is to create a universal method that can be applied to the city of Memphis enabling them to take on a spiritual metamorphosis of continuity and ecumenical prosperity in an effort to redirect this city into the light of Jesus Christ.

In an effort to erase the barriers that have enslaved the ability to unity under the bloodstained banner of Jesus Christ, many local pastors and community activist have become very vocal and active in communities around the city to solve these problems simultaneously. While many are attempting to provide practical solutions for the city of Memphis, the author believes that it starts with the church. As a result, there are several untapped areas in Memphis that is screaming for help of God and/or the agents of God. Unfortunately, due to the lack of qualified individuals, both spiritually and academically, the city of Memphis struggles have been a result of trusting the spiritual health of the city to non-qualified practitioners who have failed to provide the best and relevant treatment. It is the equivalent of when an individual has what is believed to be influenza misdiagnosed as the common cold. More often than not the poor diagnosis will certainly lead to continual declined health. It could also cause for the individual to be prescribed the wrong medical treatment or lack thereof.

Unfortunately, if this sickness continues to go untreated in the improper manner it is a strong possibility that the situation can become fatal. This is the current spiritual state of the city of Memphis. Many of the local parishes have unqualified, unproven, untrained, unmotivated, uninspired, unprofessional individuals leading the people of God to an undefined vision. Therefore the author proposes that the city of Memphis is terribly sick. One fact to support the position of the author is church to crime rate in the city of Memphis. After compiling data collected from the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the US News and World Report ranked Memphis as the sixth most dangerous city to live in the United States based on crime alone. Considering the previously stated fact, one would almost guarantee that the Christian community is definitely absent in Memphis. However, the reality is that Memphis has over 4,000 churches registered with the state of Tennessee. These are the symptoms that indicate that the city of Memphis is critical condition.

Due to the early detection of the disease, there is hope that with the help of God this city can be healed from academic and spiritual ignorance. It is the sickness of ignorance that has caused the body of Christ in the city of Memphis to miss the warning signs of disease. The warning signs include, but are not limited to poor interpretation of the scriptures, lack of education in and out of the pulpit, the absence of accountability, and character issues. In order for this healing to take place in Memphis, it must begin with true spiritual leaders taking their place on the battlefield and learning the demographics of Memphis. Once this knowledge is obtained it is essential that the application of certain spiritual gifts is used to inject the medicine this city has been yearning for, this is love. Once individuals understand the demographics of the city of

Memphis, it is possible that they can provide the necessary assistance to those who are in critical need of healing.

The history, current, and future state of the demographics of Memphis will help validate the real issues that have plagued this city. As a result of obtaining this information, it should help to the spreading of the Gospel in a healthy fashion. In this research, the author will provide a descriptive contextual view of the city of Memphis, the Christian community and areas that possess opportunities of healing.

The Synergy

It is the goal of the author to fulfill the assignment that has been placed before him by the Holy Spirit. After reviewing his journey in life, The call to ministry, and the context in which he works in ministry, there are a few things that are very apparent. It is very clear to notice the researcher has a passion for the people of God. He has rediscovered a very valuable dimension of the ministry that has gone overlooked due to the improper stewardship from the realm of physical and spiritual parental guidance. The ministry that is within the author embraces and welcomes the true idea and ministry of the relationship between the parent and the child.

What is learned through the life of the author is that he has experienced challenging and incomplete relationships with both his physical and spiritual parents. However, what is unique about the author is his willingness to admit this disconnection in his life and yet not make excuses for his upbringings. Instead, he made the conscious decision not to repeat poor parenting skills.

The author made a covenant with God that if God blessed him with paternal and spiritual children that he would not only lead them, but teach them. In addition, he found a way to set up an accountability system with his biological siblings and his spiritual siblings to ensure that as long as they were alive, they would always make sure that they were staying focused and committed to the business at hand. In this case, it is simply taking the responsibility of the lead role with actions that reflected the reverential fear of God.

The place where ministry and the normal life of the author meet is the day when God opened up his eyes and ears to be observant. It was during this time in his life when he noticed that there were several individuals that had the title of spiritual parents, but lack the support required to nurture their children. The discovery that the author made was the similarity of unprepared spiritual parents and unprepared paternal parents. In most cases, individuals who are unprepared to parent a child paternally will typically make several mistakes in the training of that child. Subsequently, those children will either pick up on the poor parental lessons being taught directly or indirectly and repeat them. Or, they may break the cycle and learn from the mistakes of their parents. Unfortunately, just like in the natural and physical relationships the spiritual relationships struggle as well.

There are many people who have the title as spiritual parents, but are missing in action. In the neighborhood where the author grew up, that individual would be labeled as a deadbeat dad. What is interesting about that situation is that many times people can witness poor parenting spiritually and do nothing about it because the members/children should not question the leader. The author strongly challenges this belief. The idea of not

asking questions to the pastor is a slave mentality. What is definitely clear is that Jesus never rebuked those who asked him questions for the sake of learning. However, it is commonly practiced in the author's context of ministry that you do not question leadership.

What the author also uncovered is how the spiritual parents love to share the scriptures that instruct the child on how to obey. However, there is not much attention given to the parent about the responsibility of training and soul watching is a part the role of the parent. Ultimately the result of poor parenting becomes very apparent in ministries. In many of the parishes in which the author matriculated through, there was rarely any reference given to academic training theologically. Due to the lack of theologically challenged pastors that are parenting people and refused to encourage theological studies says that that is a parent who does not what their child to grow. In other words, that would indicate that the leader wants to continue to tell people what the Bible says instead of the individual getting an understanding for themselves. As a result, this is an additional slave tactic that is used to promote ignorance and personal gain. Slave owners never wanted their slaves able to read because they wanted to maintain control over them. This is the same mindset that is being used in the churches.

One of the signs of poor parenting is a lack of patience. When the life of Jesus Christ is carefully examined, it is extremely pleasant to see how He handled the interaction with the people. The gospels record Jesus spending more time teaching his disciples than anything else. This should inspire spiritual parents to remember to be patient with the people. It also suggests that Jesus was well prepared to conduct such teachings. Jesus was not afraid to be asked questions because He knew the answer and He

was a man of integrity. His overall message was love. The message of love is the cure for the disease of hate that is overtaking the area that the writer is serving.

Love is arguably the most abused word in the world. In most cases, love is abused due to this lack of knowledge that people have pertaining love's true meaning. While there are several forms of love, God's love is described as Agape. This love, referred to as Agape, is well defined by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. Often times this form of selfless and unconditional love is confused with other forms of love. Other forms of love are Eros (Passionate Love), Philia (Friendship/Affectionate Love), and Storge (Natural Affection).

Eros love is form of love that focuses on the relationship between a male and female or husband and wife. Philia love is a form of love that focuses on the love shared by friends. Storge love is a form of love that is shared by family or relatives; more importantly between a parent and child. Due to the misunderstanding of the various forms of love, people have associated and confused God's love (Agape) with another form of Love. PLCC will focus on demonstrating the true spirit of God's Agape love by restoring those abused by failed love, developing an overall understand of what God's love means, and completing/maturing God's people into disciples of Jesus Christ by sharing God's perfect love to communities abroad.

Another great situation for the writer within the community in which he serves is the reality that the ministry is surrounded by a healthy sample of all nationalities. The ongoing struggle of the cultural disease known as hate is very relevant in this area. Unfortunately, this disease spilled over into the church. It is sad to uncover that the reality of skin color and the act of hatred has overtaken a city with individuals that call

themselves born again believers through Jesus Christ cannot come together to provide the one cure to this disease which is love.

The author strongly believes that the role of spiritual parenthood has to be defined and taught to the body of Christ so that those who assume the role of the parent can say they have been fully equipped and trained to handle another soul. The assignment of watching after another soul is a precious and honorable opportunity. It is the equivalent of having a child. The miracle of child birth and the blessing of providing for that child is a special gift from God. The role of spiritual parents should be view from the same lens. Every individual who is impacted by the ministry of the author should feel a very close encounter with the love of God. This sacrificial love is the gift that should never stop giving.

Within all the experiences of the author, it has prepared him for this great assignment. If it were not for all the imperfect people in the life of the author, there would be no Jason Mitchell. The researcher's life work has been shaped by individuals that were far from perfect. However, through the lineage of people that have had an influence or lack thereof on the authors life has helped pushed this birth of ministry. Without all of the failed examples of parenting and love, the author would still be in search of his assignment. It is with a thankful and grateful heart that the author is able to reflect on the highs and lows of his life in an effort to execute a model of discipleship for spiritual parents in new church plants.

CHAPTER TWO

THE STATE OF THE ART IN MINISTRY MODEL

The Responsibility of the Church

This is the vocation of the pastor: to know the parish territory, its dangers, its green meadows, its steep precipices, its seasons and possibilities. The pastor leads the flock to spring water and safe vegetation. The flock recognizes their own good through the shepherd's voice. They know their own shepherd will not mislead them. The shepherd is able to anticipate their need in advance and is willing to deal with each one individually.¹

The correlation between the pastor and a shepherd has been shared for years. In the history of the church, laity has entrusted the office of pastor to provide all that one needs to be nourished spiritually. The pastor is obligated to the parishioners and the parishioners are obligated to the pastor. The author draws attention to the idea and importance of nourishment as instructed by Jesus Christ in a conversation with Peter. After Peter was disturbed from being asked on three different occasions if he loved Jesus, finally Peter informed Jesus that he indeed loved Him. It was at that moment Peter received a challenge from Jesus that simply said, "Feed my sheep."²

Why is it such a struggle for pastors in today's church to understand the implication of spiritual nourishment? Considering the negative publicity surrounding the church in response to clergy misconduct, it would imply that the need to feed the sheep of

¹Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1983), 52.

²Jn 21:17.

Jesus Christ has become a thing of the past. With the elevated emphasis on materialism, political status, and personal gain; the office of the pastor is now viewed as an opportunity for individuals to gain wealth and notoriety. As a result, games and gimmicks flood the church in which Jesus Christ established to accommodate the individuals that share the title of pastor. In addition to this unfortunate discover, parishioners seek to emulate this behavior as though it is the expectation of Jesus Christ.

Thomas Oden, author of *Pastoral Theology: Essential of Ministry*, challenges churches to reevaluate the responsibility of the church from the pulpit to the pew. One of the main challenges that Oden presents in which the researcher agrees is the notion that pastoral ministry needs to be clearly defined. In doing this, everyone understand what their role is within the church and can then promote accountability. Out of tradition, many people come to church without knowledge of what a pastor is to the parishioner. Thus Oden says, “Christian ministry is energized by the pivotal conviction that Christ himself ordained and established the pastoral office for edification and guidance to the church.”³

An additional challenge that plagues the church today is lack of Christian educational emphasis. The author agrees with Charles Foster regarding the importance of Christian education. The reason for many of the irresponsible trends and behaviors manifesting itself into the church context is because the church struggles with training the parishioners. The actions and results of the church in today’s demonstration of ministry

³Ibid., 50.

reflect flaws in the church education vessel.⁴ Due to lack of effective spirit lead training, the parishioners suffer and indirectly become captives to tradition. Foster provides five explanations for flaws in the church education vessel. The fourth explanation supports the author's warning and danger in becoming stuck in tradition. Foster states:

The Cultural Captivity of Church Education. A clue to one of the most serious flaws in the church's education has been its proclivity to sanction the cultural status quo rather than to embrace the transformational message of the gospel for the emancipation of the people from their spiritual, social, political, or economic bondage. In the history of the United States and Canada, the church's education has been used to alienate native people from their cultural heritage and to oppress enslaved and marginalized people. It has perpetuated patterns of cultural dominance among immigrants and sustained the dominance of patriarchal perspectives and practices in the organization of church education and in the content of church teachings.⁵

This concept that the church is captive due to the poor teachings that have migrated itself into the church is dangerous to the success of Christian ministry. The practices that are conducted in the church today, especially in new church plants, often perpetuate systems of tradition that enslave the parishioners. The best way to avoid this when establishing a new ministry is to lay the right foundation. When exploring Christian education Karen Tye states, "The difficulty comes when we operate out of one narrow definition of Christian education and are unable to see other ways of understanding what we are doing."⁶

In the process of implementing new church plants and avoiding the trap of transferring the people from one prison of ministry to another relies on the commitment to create an atmosphere of worship that encourages spiritual growth and discipleship.

⁴Charles R. Foster, *Educating Congregations: The Future of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 17.

⁵Ibid., 31.

⁶Karen B. Tye, *Basics of Christian Education* (Danvers, MA: Chalice Press, 2000), 13.

This requires an emphasis on being intentional about implementing effective training practices. One area that requires special attention is the segmentation of your educational cell groups. This is particularly in reference to the younger generations. The author's experience consists of Sunday school programs that were stagnant due to the relevance of the educational structure. This is an issue that is noted by Charles Foster as being one of the reasons there is an exodus from the church with the younger generations.⁷

It has been said that the youth is the future of the church. Often stated in pulpits across America, it would seem that there would be more of an emphasis on truly training the younger generations to carry the mantle of the next generation of church leaders. Instead the youth and young adults are leaving the church. A consequence of the lack of attention in church education may be seen in the exodus from churches of many of the brightest and most capable youth and young adults.⁸ Unfortunately, the church is missing out on an opportunity to raise up leaders that can in fact knock that the walls that entrap the people of the church with educational strategies.

Robert Lupton introduced an idea that the church and charities actually hurt those they seek to help. In his work *Toxic Charity*, he explores and exposes motives and provides a solution to reverse this type of behavior. This thought that is shared by Lupton challenges the church to recognize that many times there is far more damage being done to the people that help. It should be considered and oxymoron to be called the church and yet there is no spiritual growth, discipleship, or personal edification. Instead, the church is known more for the hurt that is goes on at the place that was established for God's

⁷Charles R. Foster, *Educating Congregations: The Future of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 51.

⁸Ibid., 86.

people. Lupton says, “Cure without care is like a gift given from a cold heart.”⁹ A major concern for the church is the lack of care that is required to produce the healing.

The goal of the church has to be to create a more wholesome Christian experience. This process begins with our thinking. It is a common struggle for new church plants to look for the mega church results in the development phase of the ministry. This mistake generates false expectations on the success of the ministry. Samuel Rima argues that many pastors or those in pastoral ministry have an obsession with the mega church. However, statistical data collected by the Barna Group uncover the reality that over eighty-five percent of congregations in America are less than 200 people. This obsession for the mega church that is argued by Rima becomes the standard in which church are measured as being successful.¹⁰ The researcher believes this is a great approach to take in building a solid church plant. Success of a ministry should be measured by the growth of the individuals. Once this is accomplished, the church will grow from the inside out. Also, as the ministry grows in size, it will be growing with members that are more than simply church attenders. Instead the church will have an overflow of participants demonstrating their gifts.

The responsibility of the church is to understand the role of the shepherd to the sheep, build a foundation on the younger generation through effective education, and changing the way of thinking. Right now, the church has a long way to the overwhelming amount of ministries that are being launched without having a clear vision for the people to read embrace and run with. The author has noticed through recent history, especially in

⁹Robert D. Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Help those they Hurt* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2011), 51.

¹⁰Samuel D. Rima, *Rethinking the Successful Church* (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 11.

the city of his context, there are many individuals that are starting ministries for the wrong reason. A few of those reasons consist of anger with the leadership of the previous church, hurt by an individual of the previous church, or frustration with some of the practices or lack thereof with the previous church. This is the worst way to start a ministry.

Having the right model setup for ministry is essential for Christian development. The correct process of launching a ministry is to first hear from God. It is extremely dangerous to begin a ministry because of frustration within the church. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, beginning a ministry will quickly come to an end if God is not the reason for the ministry. Secondly, the vision of the ministry has to be clear for the people to understand. Many of the congregations that exist in the city of the author lack true vision. As a result, many of the people that are looking for a real experience and encounter from God find themselves in a cycle of going from church to church. They never find themselves settled and unfortunately they never grow. After a period of going through this repeated process, the people experience burnout and leave the church all together.

The Process to Becoming a Mature Ministry

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you,

ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.¹¹

The state of ministry in today's society has to focus on understanding what true ministry must consist of in order to produce results. The author challenges ministries that lack production. Jesus clearly instructs that a process of measuring success in ministry is linked to the production of spiritual fruit. The supply comes from God through the connection of Jesus Christ. No act of ministry will work without maintaining a connection to God through Jesus Christ. The author challenges unproductive ministry because Jesus challenged unproductive ministry. It may appear to be a hard reality, but maybe Jesus is cutting off all the ministries that are not producing fruit. With the high number of churches that closes their doors each year versus the number of churches that open their doors, could it not be that Jesus is following through on the promise of production or extraction.

Another message that Jesus shares with his disciples is that as long as they stay connected to him, production is guaranteed. This may also suggest that maybe some pastors and or ministries started out on the right path later thought that they did not need Jesus anymore. This particular ministry may reflect the attitude of the church that makes it about the cars, clothes, houses, status, and political gain and not about the message of salvation. There may in fact be a struggle to participate in real ministry, but Jesus grants security by ensuring that the people that are producing will be pruned or taken care of.

A final point that Jesus calls out that is extremely relevant to the state of ministry today is the notion that the production of fruit is the sign that others will identify that true

¹¹Jn 15:1-8 (NIV).

disciples of Jesus Christ exist. The author believes that several present day ministries and new church plants might lack growth because people can clearly see that nothing is being produced. People are looking from real ministry and the church as to become a place that demonstrates maturity and growth so that the people can experience the same.

In the book, *Journey to Wholeness: The Immersion*, John Guns offers an uplifting guide to spiritual growth, wisdom, and life lessons to help the reader to become whole on this journey walk with Jesus Christ. While he includes several steps to becoming mature, one message in particular that he calls out is the need and the action of faith.¹² This is an area where the church struggles. It becomes hard for people to see the packed church when a ministry first starts. However, if God planted the seed God will give the increase. This requires faith. Faith must be developed. Faith must be demonstrated.

Before one can grow in faith, it might require a healing. A major hurdle for the church today is facing today is desperate need for healing. The author believes that many churches are started out of personal aspiration and not the spiritual inspiration. This can be proven due to the amount of hurt that is experienced in the parishes. The message from those church become messages of bashing other ministries versus following through on what God called one to do. This is not to position and argument that God has not called certain individuals to begin a ministry. This is to suggest that if the reason to start a ministry is because one was damaged in the church, it will be very difficult to minister to other damaged people.

¹²John E. Guns, *Journey to Wholeness: The Immersion* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse.com Publishers, 2011), 106.

The author believes a healing must take place before a leader can effectively lead others. The church is going to attract other hurt people in search of healing. If the leader is still hurt, then that leader runs the risk of bleeding on the people. Ministry can only be effective if one is ministering from the scar. Unfortunately, many church plants are ministering from an open wound. The backlash from this setup is producing a ministry that lacks production and perpetuates a life of pity. The church then becomes a den of people that are struggling with the view of church. When this is the case, the hurt and pain then forces the people out of the church.

The author supports the idea of faith and healing as presented by Millicent Hunter in the book, *How To Survive The ~~Heart~~ Hurt Attack*. Hunter offers a prescription for healing that is based on faith.

- Vitamin A: Act on Faith
- Vitamin B₁: Begin with Faith
- Vitamin B₂: Believe in Faith
- Vitamin C: Continue in Faith
- Vitamin D: Demonstrate Your Faith
- Vitamin E: Exercise Your Faith
- Vitamin K: Keep the Faith¹³

Hunter identifies many of the sicknesses in the church that require healing as depression, disappointment, low self-esteem, loneliness, fear, guilt, anger, bitterness, illness, broken relationship, betrayal, infidelity, weariness and addiction. These are all ailments that have

¹³Millicent Hunter, *How To Survive The ~~Heart~~ Hurt Attack* (Philadelphia, PA: Hunter House Publishers, 2012), 116.

and are attacking the church body. The church that has all these conditions requires the need for a solid ministry that can be prepared to assist in the healing process.

The damage that is done in the church is when the issue or sickness is not dealt with. In order to meet the challenge that a hurt attack brings to your life and grow spiritually healthy from it, there is no substitute for consistent, systematic study of God's Word.¹⁴ There is no way around the truth. Many pastors fail to preach the word for fear of losing members, money or fame. The Word of God is given to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.¹⁵ The church cannot avoid the tough issues. When issues are overlooked and dealt with, it can cause for greater problems down the line.

In an effort to further support the thought of healing before effective ministry can take place, Hunter says, "You must apply the right prescription."¹⁶ She also adds that petroleum jelly is excellent for soothing dry skin and bumps and bruises, but totally ineffective in treating a broken leg.¹⁷ This is often the case in the church today. Many times the wrong person is serving as the practitioner. Pulpits today are filled with many people who have no idea what they are doing and ultimately cause more damage than healing. The researcher adds to this thought by suggesting not only does the right prescription need to be given, but the right amount should be given as well. This is an idea that is centered on becoming complete or spiritually mature.

¹⁴Ibid., 72.

¹⁵2 Tm 4:2 (NIV).

¹⁶Hunter, *How To Survive The Heart Hurt Attack*, 73.

¹⁷Ibid., 73.

Once the right prescription is administered, it has a period in which it should either be discontinued or it expires. Should the individual require more of the same prescription, the person would have to go back to the physician to be checked out. This process creates an opportunity for accountability. This is not the norm for many churches. Accountability will force the member and the leader to be transparent and honest about progress. This will also prevent overdoses, otherwise defined by the author as burnout, redundant, or powerless. In these instances the person can do too much that they become tired and want to quit. These individuals have done church so much that the act of taking the wrong dosage makes them sick. It could also suggest that they are strung out on church and just coming and do not realize there is no change. These individual church goers are just that, church goers. They have taken so much poor advice, counselling, teaching, and preaching, they are simply sick.

This project uncovers a better process that builds up the ministry in such a way that establishes core values that address the entire need of the people. It challenges the congregation to be willing to deal with the issues often left unattended. The day in which the only time the word ministry appears in a church is in the covers of a bulletin or merely on a website for show has to stop. The demonstration of ministry has to be manifested or the church will continue to recycle people and pass them off from one church to the next. The result of this behavior will ultimately create church as usual or a status quo mindset church. These are the behaviors that have migrated its way into the church and a solution is needed to revive the fruitful production of the church.

The Plan of Action

How can the church transition into developing ministries that are setup the right way to avoid the continuation of nonproductive fellowship. With the rise of startup churches and church plants, the essential call for a model to institute effective discipleship is absolutely critical. The researcher has observed a few ministries that offer a signs of hope for new church plants. Not all church plants are failures. Not all church plants are launched out of anger and hurt. Not all church plants are searching for identity. There are methods that are available to ensure the demonstration of irresponsible behavior does not cause the church fail in the assignment of building up leaders.

Frank A. Thomas believes the understanding the depth, height and width of the love of Jesus Christ in the heart of the leader to live in accordance to the full measure of Christ is vitally important. Thomas says, “The love of Christ has to come down to my very core and free me of what I think about me.”¹⁸ Thomas position on the personal choice to totally understand God’s specific call to an individual leader or pastor is the foundation of being effective in the assignment given by God. If one does not make the choice to believe in what God has called them to or lacks confidence in what God has called them to, ministry will be a struggle. Regardless of what happens in life, we can take it, mold it, and shape it into an opportunity.¹⁹

What God has given every pastor is an opportunity to represent the God before the people of God. This is equivalent to same message that God gave Moses. Moses was

¹⁸Frank A. Thomas, *The Choice: Living Your Passion From Inside Out* (Chicago, IL: MMGI Books, 2013), 22.

¹⁹Ibid., 22.

to go before the people and represent God. Moses also had the responsibility to go to God on behalf of the people. This responsibility of leadership cannot be managed by anyone that lacks confidence. Leaders can only have this confidence if they are sure that God has called them to the office of the pastor.

I have discovered that whenever I say I choose, my own inner power and authority come into the situation and I find opportunity in any situation. I had to reframe the statement as an “I choose statement.” In response to God’s call, I choose to be a pastor because it allows me to inspire, encourage, touch and teach many, and enables me to express my values of growth, service to God and commitment to my family.²⁰

There does not appear to be a shortage of confidence in the initial launch of ministry for new church plants and pastors. The confidence begins to move into question when the challenges come. If the ministry was truly inspired by God, God will give the strength and direction on how to survive the storms. The one way to determine whether or not one truly heard from God is to evaluate the response to a storm. Storms are going to beat up on every house whether God said build it or not. However, only the house that is built on the rock of Jesus Christ will stand. If the ministry can stand through the trials of life, the ministry must be built of the right foundation and based off pure motives. Otherwise, if the ministry fails, that may be an indicator that just maybe the individual did not hear from God. Another alternative is the individual making the choice to stop trusting in God.

In the event the pastor wants to walk away from the office of pastor is not always because God did not call them or they stopped trusting God. It could be that the pastor is

²⁰Ibid., 23.

discouraged from the hurt that others experience in the church. I agree with Thomas when he argues that church hurt is not the fault of the church but the people in the church.

Some people are hyper-sensitive and unreasonable. Some people are immature. Some people are manipulative. Some people want what they want they want and will do whatever it takes to get what they want. And, when they don't get their way, then they have hurt feelings. I've seen people who are aggressive as hell, hurting people, wounding people to get their way, and then when you call them out, all of a sudden the get hurt—like you really hurt their feelings. Why is it that the most belligerent people have the most sensitive feelings when they are called on their belligerency? Not all of the hurts in the church are the fault of the church. Sometimes it is the fault of the individual.²¹

Regardless of who is doing the hurting, this behavior has to be addressed in the church. However, if the individuals that are doing the hurting are represented as the leading financial contributors in the church, most times this person is allowed to hurt people in the church—including the pastor for fear. This behavior cannot be tolerated. Pastors have to choose to be bold and trust what God has called them to do. If God gave the vision to start ministry, God will provide.

Ken Blanchard is recognized by the work he provided to encourage that ministry is successful when the leaders in the church, lead like Jesus. In his book, *Lead Like Jesus*, Blanchard offers several principles from the greatest leader of all time. One of the points that Blanchard offers is that leadership is a process of influence. Some people are leaders and do not realize it. Others want to be leaders, but do not have the gift or ability to influence personal behaviors, thinking, or development. To add further clarity to this argument, Blanchard also leans on the instructions of Jesus Christ when he said, “Who ever want to be great among you must first be a servant just as the Son of Man did.”²²

²¹Ibid., 116.

²²Mt 20:25.

This is another struggling area for the church. Many pastors want to be served versus serving. In a day that is filled with lead tables, reservations, and people to fetch water and yes people—the church is lacking true leadership that reflects that of Jesus Christ. Blanchard describes this behavior as the most persistent barrier when attempting to lead like Jesus is the heart motivated by self-interests. This behavior is seen in the church frequently when pastors want to know how well they preached. To further magnify this self-motivated mindset, the conversations among the circle of preachers are filled with statements of braggadocious self-confidence. This is not confidence in God. This is a confidence in the display of the gift which was given without repentance. When these gifts are on display, people become more fascinated with the showmanship versus the move of God. When people should be celebrating the move of God and giving God glory, instead celebration is given to the preacher or pastor. Statements of endearment are shared such as, “you killed it” or “you murdered that house!” In these self-seeking circles, the pastors are more concerned about having an armor bearer with ten members versus bearing the infirmities of the weak.

Blanchard also reminds the church pastor and leader that the role of a disciple of Christ is to be fishers of men. The work of the leader should always be in line with building the body strong and not tearing the body down. The pastors are warned in the Word, “Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture.”²³ The author believes that the reason for pastors getting caught up in selfish forms of leadership is because they do not reverence the pasture of God. The church or pasture of God belongs to God. When churches are established by individuals that God called to pastor,

²³Jer 23:1.

that does not mean that the pastor is the founder of the church. God is the founder of the church. When pastors understand that the church belongs to God, then the irresponsible behaviors can be reversed. Blanchard would call the reversal of such behaviors a produce of demonstrating the five habits of a servant leader.

Leading like Jesus is a great concept because it keeps the focus on Jesus. The attention remains on Jesus. It shifts the focus off the person and keeps it on the Master of Faith. A pastor should be grateful and honored that God wants to attention. God does not want the pastor to carry that burden. It is enough for a pastor to carry the load of being and under shepherd of the Good Shepherd's flock. Blanchard also adds that this only effective when one embraces a life of purpose. One has to be committed to this lifestyle of leadership the way Jesus taught leadership.

An essential point that Blanchard offers is an element of accountability. He suggests that self-checks should be conducted to in order to make sure that the leadership remains on track and does not drift off into participating in activities that do not support the calling. This self-check is a matter of maintaining the heart of Christ, remaining focused to the assignment, and demonstrating the habits of Christ.

Be a gardener.
Dig a ditch
Toil and sweat,
And turn the earth upside down
And seek the deepness
And water the plants in time.
Continue this labor
And make sweet floods to run
And noble and abundant fruits to spring.
Take this food and drink

And carry it to God
As your true worship - Julian of Norwich²⁴

When evaluating spiritual parenting, the plan for planting ministry has to have a pastor/parent that understands the role of the gardener. A gardener, like a community's counselor and caregiver, has a twofold task. A gardener must tend to the ground as well as cultivate the plants growing in the ground. The gardener does not make the plants grow, God does. The gardener attends to their growth as the plants become what they are meant to be.²⁵ Kornfeld offers the idea that serving in the garden requires one that is willing to train and develop the plants by cultivating the plants. The principles that are offered to guide the process of cultivating wholeness are as follows:

- People are whole: mind, body, psyche, and spirit are integrated in that whole.
- Because of a paradigm shift, we are becoming more aware of our wholeness.
- People need each other. We live in systems; we're connected to one another, to the environment, and to the universe.
- We are always changing. Life is in flux; chaos is an understandable aspect of creativity.
- Wholeness contains the negative and the positive, health and illness. Death is a part of life.
- We become aware of our wholeness in relationship; we stay aware in relationship. Some relationship can harm us.
- We are moving away from mostly hierarchical relationships towards those of collegiality. A new balance is being achieved as we appreciate the interrelationships of the masculine and feminine and as we respect and utilize our unique gifts.

²⁴Margaret Kornfeld, *Cultivating Wholeness: A Guide to Care and Counseling in Faith Communities* (New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004), 1.

²⁵Ibid., 10.

- We are integrating and synthesizing insights if science, human behavior, and religion.
- As we develop more flexible ways of thinking we are also learning to live with ambiguity.
- Individuals are to be respected, with all their uniqueness and diversity. They need community but that are not to be swallowed up by community.²⁶

While the author contends some of the principles, the overall message of living in a community of various types of people and cultivating the garden in which pastors are called to, this message liberates the church and the people of the church. The author believes that some of the principles open the door for mediocrity in the church. It is important that certain standards be established to avoid confusion in the garden.

Kornfeld is supported by the author regarding her logic that defines the ground and the soil. In this metaphor, the ground is the community itself, with all the properties that make it a safe, healing place. The soil represents the religious tradition and the expression of it.²⁷ The ground and the soil are filled with many differences. However, the community should be growing and so should the plants in the garden. The churches in the communities of the author's context have room to grown with the ground it occupies. The community could stand a makeover in an effort to grow the communities socially, economically, and spiritually. "As it relates to spiritual parenting, the neglect of the community of children God has instructed pastors to oversee creates a lasting traumatic effect on the amygdala—emotional brain."²⁸ This area of the brain stores emotional memory. When the child is mistreated and not taken care of, they can easily suffer and

²⁶Ibid., 13.

²⁷Ibid., 35.

²⁸Ibid., 260.

develop a poor image of the church. Kornfeld's challenge for the church is to focus on building a healthy church, which is needed in the church today.

Several researchers came together to produce *Human Development and Faith: Life-Cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*. This work in particular also adds value to the state of ministry. The editor, Felicity Kelcourse, captures the connection of valuing the role of God's people as children that require development. The entire work sums up the importance of embracing the stages of the people of God. No two people are alike. However, in the church we have the same role. It is the equivalent to the children of a normal set of parents. None of the children are the same. They all grow at different levels. Some advance quicker than others. The children are simply different. However they all have to be nourished so that growth can take place. Kelcourse captures the complete life-cycle of the child of God to adulthood. This type of ministry model will add value to the ongoing development in new church plants. The implementation of these strategies helps to uncover generational curses and prevent the ongoing dysfunctional behavior.

"Truth be told, it feels like as if ministry has become a production line: churning out sermons, putting on events, trying to generate another wave of enthusiasm for evangelism. If only there was a different way of doing church."²⁹ This statement echoes the indirect message of the church. How can the church be different the same old cycles that generate no power? Tim Chester and Steve Timmis share a wonderful challenge for churches looking to be birthed into environments in which the development of God's

²⁹Tim Chester and Steve Timmis, *Total Church: A Radical Reshaping Around Gospel and Community* (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2008), 13.

children can be accomplished. The church has to be complete. After researching the work of Chester and Timmis, the author developed the idea that the completion and perfection has to get to completion. Without this level of maturation, the ministry can have holes. The holes over time hurt the ministry if they are not closed. Over time churches seem to acquire committees, meetings, programs, and traditions, none of which may be wrong in themselves, but which cumulatively move the church from mission to maintenance mode.³⁰ Church planting requires careful planning and training to avoid these types of holes. While a church may mean well, staying focused on the assignment at hand will help the church to avoid the unnecessary struggles of church planting.

³⁰Ibid., 86.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Biblical Foundation

When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” And they said, “Some say that Thou art John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered and said unto him, “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father who is in Heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”¹

It is recorded in the Holy Scriptures, during the incline of Jesus’ public ministry, of a situation that changed the way ministry should be implemented forever. It was during this moment that Jesus was in an intimate conversation with His disciples that set the foundation for the manner in which the gospel should be presented to the world. During this particular time the disciples had become the first students at the Jesus school of theology. They experienced many lessons in the classroom of Jesus in which they were taught theory and they also participated in lab studies that allowed them the opportunity to witness the practical application of the lessons taught by founder and professor. This particular teaching was so revolutionary that it created this amazing moment in biblical history that provided the foundation and model of how ministry should forever be

¹Mt. 16:13-18 (NIV).

conducted. In this moment with the disciples, Jesus inquired about what the perception of His true identity was within the worldly and religious communities.

According to Saint Matthew's account of the situation, all the disciples responded in unison that the fame and identity of Jesus in the various communities was linked to either John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets.² The author believes that the response of the disciples generated the most notable scripture for church planting and church structure. After the disciples quickly acknowledged the what others had to say about Jesus, Jesus then administered a one question oral examination that change the administration of the teaching of God.

The disciples had spent more time with Jesus than any other groups of people. The knowledge of Jesus, the man from Nazareth was spreading rapidly. Just to be sure there was no confusion with those that were in close proximity of Jesus, the author suggests that this was an account that was more symbolic of the declaration of Christ, but a lesson of accountability, commitment, and allegiance. Therefore Jesus, without hesitation, wanted to know who the disciples testify Jesus to be. Unlike the previous question in which all the disciples spoke up together, only the Apostle Peter spoke up to acknowledge the true identity of Jesus. After Peter responded, Jesus then took time to take the disciples back to school.

The direction of the fellowship of God's people needed an extreme makeover. Thus, the Messiah that the people of God had been anxiously awaiting decides that the way ministry is to function from that point on would have to reflect the true identity that Peter was able to articulate under the anointing of God. As a result, Jesus charges the

²Mt 16:14.

disciples that it is the foundation in which the church should be built. It is only on this foundation will the church be able to build structure. Therefore, the author intends to provide the additional scriptures that support the planting of a twenty first century church ministry that creates a model for spiritual parenthood. The scriptures that support this model will focus on reversing the behavior of spiritual irresponsibility in a new church plant.

Since the beginning of time, God has consistently provided messages that capture the importance of family values. It was not until after mankind was created before God decided to take rest from the creation of God. It is in this lesson that when planting church ministry and in new church starts that families are valued and disciplined. Adam and Eve faced a unique challenge. They were planted in a community in which they had everything they needed and what they wanted. The initial challenge that they faced was to flourish in the place God planted them. This became a challenge because they took their eyes off of what God blessed them with and looked at what God instructed them not to touch.

It is essential that new church plants embrace this lesson. It is very easy for a new church plant to look across the street at another institution of religion and desire what they have. As intriguing as what the next institution may have, it is absolute vital that new church plants are focused and dedicated to fulfilling the instructions that God have given to that particular ministry. While all ministries should be headed in the same direction—moving toward the kingdom of Heaven, the author believes that God place all ministries on different paths. The journey of each ministry is full of its own peaks, valleys, turns, and stops. However, no ministry is identical.

What God teaches in the very beginning of the Holy Scriptures is unity, accountability, vision, commitment, focus, work ethic, character, and structure. Out of all these lessons, the author believes for a new church plant that structure is the most important. With structure comes discipline. When a new church plant is being developed and launched, there is a very small margin for error. One of the best ways to avoid errors is to know that God is the planter of that ministry. If the ministry is planted for any reason other than what God has instructed, the ministry will not be authentic. Due to the origin of sin and disobedience of Adam and Eve, they were then forced to become parents of the human race. Regardless to whether or not they felt they were ready, God decided that their assignment was to be fruitful and multiply.

Adam and Eve were two imperfect people that were created by a perfect God. They now had the new assignment of birthing children into an imperfect world, led by imperfect people that needed to embrace the one and only perfect God. Before the creation of a church or organized religion, the instructions for the parents of the human race were to effectively administrate a structure that implemented accountability. During this process, God was gracious with time. As the earth became very populated, there became many relationships between parent and child. With all these relationships that were created, there are several that the author could draw reference examples from.

There are three references of scripture that the author will use to support the model for spiritual parenthood. The three specific examples in which the author will draw and shape his model on will capture experiences in the Holy Scriptures before the life of Jesus Christ, during the life of Jesus Christ, and after the life of Jesus Christ. The first example of scripture captures the life of David and his relationship with his biological

father and his spiritual father. The second example will focus on the life of Jesus, the relationship with His parents and how that impacted His role as a spiritual parent. The third example will come from the life Timothy and the relationship with his spiritual father. All three of these examples will shape the biblical foundation of the model that the author believes will help the church with the need to move beyond the behaviors, both learned and developed, that have prevented the church from having the necessary spiritual relationships that reflect the kingdom of God.

When examining the make-up and structure of organized faith and religion along with the purpose of the church, the first ministry starts in the home. Considering the reality that the influence from the home drives the decision for one to connect with the spiritual/religious family, the relationship between parent and child is absolutely essential. King Solomon provided a prophetic instruction, under the inspiration of God, which simply lays out the importance of training.³ Assuming a parent trains and raises the child in the admonition of the Lord, this would suggest that as the child matures, they will not go astray. Or, if they go astray they will have matured in such a way that they should be able to recover because of their relationship with God. On the opposite side of the situation, if the parent fails to train the child in the admonition of the Lord that would suggest the child having a difficult time demonstrating maturity during the straying moments of life. This scripture is definitely prophetic in the life of David. The life of David captures parenthood from a natural and spiritual standpoint. More importantly, the Old Testament account of David truly gives a biblical foundational model for spiritual parenthood.

³Prv 22:6.

A Man After God's Own Heart

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord." But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.⁴

Before Jesus came on the scene, there existed an imperfect yet favored man of God that played an intricate role in producing the lineage of Jesus. The life of David is very interesting. The author believes that the upbringing of David that is captured in the Holy Scriptures is an extraordinary example of how parenting has an impact on the life of a child. By carefully reviewing his interaction with his father and siblings, the author believes that the church is provided with great examples of the parent to child relationship. There are two particular occasions that validates the author's biblical theory on spiritual parenting from the experiences of David's life.

Many have preached and/or have taught the childhood story of David as a story in which his father had a non-favorable relationship with David. The reasoning behind this poor thinking is due to a narrow exegetical process of interpreting the text. Naturally,

⁴1Sm 16:6-13.

when reading the text of regarding the anointing of David as King, many accused David as not being the child in which Jesse favored. David is the youngest of eight sons recording in this account. When Samuel shows up to anoint a King, Jesse presents seven of his sons. In his presentation to Samuel, he never mentions David. This is an interesting form of parenting. Jesse has an opportunity to present all of his sons to Samuel; however, for whatever reason he makes the conscious decision to disregard mentioning David as another option for Samuel to consider. The challenge of this form of parenting is when children are placed in a position in which they are forced to feel disregarded. Another point that can be revealed in this method of parenting is the parent over analyzing the readiness of their child to produce effective results in leadership. The author believes that Jesse missed the mark of understanding the growth of his son.

Jesse placed David in the office or position of a shepherd. It is in this one position that David learned how to be bold and developed the characteristics of being a provider, leader, steward and protector. While the older brothers appeared to have been going through a process of tradition, David was being setup as the leader. The author was in a similar situation. As the youngest of four boys, Jason was pulled from the role of battle. Gwendolyn, his mother, often sent the older brothers ahead to deal with the mature affairs of life. Jason's mother is known for sharing the testimony, "God showed me that something was special about Jason. My instructions from God were prepare him for the leadership of this family. Jason is anointed by God to lead the people of God." This appears to have been the same approach Jesse was using. Unfortunately, his timing was off track. When God showed up to anoint the chosen child David, Jesse seemed to have forgotten the on the job training that David received. However, while the older brothers

were doing what they were instructed to do, young David was taking care of and protecting the family's wealth. This experience led David to testifying about the experience he gained while serving in the office of shepherd. Even after the anointing of David by Samuel, Jesse still was a bit slothful in accepting the greatness in this future King of Israel.

Jesse's problem from a parental standpoint was falling victim to tradition. When customary behavior creates road blocks on the journey of spiritual prosperity, one should question the motivation of the model of life being implemented. Jesse should have questioned himself when he was simply sending David to feed those at war with the Philistines. The message that is sent in this situation is for David to do what he is told and stay out of the way. The reality was David was ready and anointed. David was called and qualified. However, his father was holding him back for fear of breaking tradition. David was old enough to fight off lions and bears to take care of his father sheep, but was not old enough to go to war.⁵ This same mindset was even demonstrated by David older brothers. The author believes that the way that David was raised by his father indirectly gave his older brothers the power to treat David the same way. It is a good thing that David realized who he belonged to.⁶ The indication that David would announce the Lord as his shepherd must have helped David to realize purpose and salvation. Biologically, David had to address this parent child relationship with respect and trust in God. David also had to carry the same principle into the arena of his spiritual calling to lead. While under the leadership of king Saul, David encountered tradition again. Saul was leading an

⁵1 Sam 17:34-35.

⁶Ps 23:1.

army that was afraid of the real issue, Goliath. As a result, the children of God were hiding when David showed up to feed them. David faced king Saul with boldness. Where did David learn this boldness? Did he learn it from his father who was not in the army fighting? Did he learn this boldness from his older brothers that were a part of the army that was hiding? Through the life of David, it is apparent that God will teach what has not been taught by those with the responsibility to teach.

Saul equally had a problem from a spiritual parenting standpoint. David stood up to Saul and Saul's army by declaring victory over the enemy through the grace and favor of God. Like David, the author believed in the God he was taught about as a child.⁷ In the spiritual realm of leadership in the traditional church, the image of a leader has been shaped to look a certain way. Saul presented this idea to David without reviewing his calling and qualifications. As a result, David had to remind Saul that he was not going to win the war against Goliath the way Saul wanted him to fight. David's track record had taken him down a journey of life that gave him the boldness to move forward in victory the way God had taught him while he was given the office of shepherd.

Pastors and/or spiritual parents are failing to teach and train young anointed vessels of God according to God plan. Instead, you future leaders are sized up by the life of the parent. Saul wanted David to look like him when it was time to fight. God showed David a different way to fight. God taught David that he is victorious in everything if God is the head of everything. David learn the secret to war; faith. Saul would have done damage to David if he would have forced David to fight with his armor. In an effort to

⁷Jason A. Mitchell. *Spiritual Autobiography* (Dayton, OH: United Theological Seminary. 2012).

make themselves look better than they really are, pastors today will encourage their spiritual children to be like them instead of striving after God.

The relationship that David had with Jesse and Saul as parental figure both biologically and spiritually was shaped in imperfections. Jesse and Saul both missed the importance of investing in what God had birth through the life of David. Not all children are like David. There are many young people that have been called and anointed by God to do a great work that fall by the wayside because they did not have the passion live beyond the parenting that was provided to them. The author believes that there is a group of young people that God has called and ordained to do a great work that requires nurturing and training for the development and administration of their gifts. It is time out for creating a pulpit full of carbon cutout preachers and copycat leaders. It is unfortunate that there are leaders that will become jealous of the anointing of the next leader like Saul did with David. Saul was not supportive of David. Instead he wanted to destroy David. It is the responsibility of the parent or leader to train the child, not destroy the child. When a parent becomes more focused on trying to make the child be like them instead of God, the child will live a life that pleases the parent versus God.

As a result, the body of Christ will have people that will enter the role of a spiritual parent repeating the same cycle of generational curses. Saul and Jesse demonstrated sign of spiritual irresponsibility. The job of today's church leaders is to reverse this behavior. It is very fascinating that through these imperfections the production of a perfect savior was able to be manifest through this very same lineage.

Taking Care of Business

The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the Feast; and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it, but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day's journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances. When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him. Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have you treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You." And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them. And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.⁸

The life of Jesus Christ should be used as the base foundation for all models of ministry success. Parenting in the church can be considered complex. However, Jesus introduces a life that provides simplicity to a process that had been traditionalized through the history of religion and not spiritual influence. The parents of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, were victims of religion. They were not bad parents; they had just attended so many religious events that they too became religious. God thought enough of Mary and Joseph to choose them to be the parents of Jesus Christ. They demonstrated great resolve and focus in the early life of Jesus. Joseph demonstrated leadership, patience, and trust when Mary informed him that she was pregnant. The shame that would associate with a woman having sex outside the marriage would destroy their marriage. Instead, Joseph

⁸Lk 2:40-52 (NASB).

accepts and acts on the instruction to move to safety demonstrated that he was a man of God that also trusts God. Mary was honest with her husband and effectively communicated the message that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. This was a good couple that allowed religion to impact the interaction of training their child.

Today there are so many non-edifying events that take place in certain parishes just because the organizing pastor from 400 years ago established the event at the church. Religion will make a current day parent attend that event and lose their seeded gift in the process just like Mary and Joseph. God blessed Mary and Joseph with a seed. While attending a religious event they lost their seed/gift. Spiritual gifts are being lost in the church and during religious events. This reality is absolutely terrible. The church should be a place where gifts are being manifested. However, in the church parents are guilty of losing their children in the church because the concern is more centered on special days that exalt mankind and not the creator of mankind. The author believes that they meant well, but failed to cultivate the gift.

This is a similar situation for the author. He lived under the influence of spiritual parents that had good intentions, but allowed religion to impact their daily living. Many spiritual parents are struggling to apply practical principles that enhance the development of spiritual gifts. This is a result of doing what spiritual legalism has bound the church to. Mary and Joseph are indeed different though. Even though they made a mistake, they went to correct their mistake. Not many people that operate in the parenting position will go back and correct wrong doings. Mary and Joseph diligently went back to find their lost seed/gift and make it right. The author believes that if the church leaders and spiritual

parents will go back and correct their short comings, the gifts can be manifested in the communities of the world.

Jesus effectively informed his parents that they were not going about this process the right way. When Mary and Joseph finally found Jesus, he was in the temple (church). By religious law, Jesus was not required to attend this festival because He was only twelve years old. The custom was that the male child was not required to attend this festival until he was thirteen. Mary and Joseph deserve credit for not making Jesus stay home like present day parents are accustomed to doing. Jesus must have been asking His parents can he attend. They obviously agreed to bring him. This is a great lesson for parents to welcome the participation of a child that wants to attend worship.

The danger in bringing the child to church just because it is the thing to do prevents effective training and subsequently stunts the child's growth. Jesus was growing. Even though Mary and Joseph had fallen victim to religion, they were spiritual sound enough to attend to the assignment God had given them. Before they left for the festival, Jesus was growing. When they found Jesus in the temple, Jesus was growing. When they left the temple, Jesus was respectful to His parents and yet still growing. Mary and Joseph were transformed from the way of religion when they heard their twelve year old son remind them that they should not have had a hard time looking for him because he was where he was supposed to be. Not only was Jesus in the place where he was supposed to be, he reminded them that they should have known that He would be taking care of the business of God.

More than anyone, Mary and Joseph had received the Word from God of what the identity of Jesus was. This was a mistake that Mary and Joseph decided was not going to

happen again. The author believes that is why Mary is recorded as saying that she treasured all those events in her heart.⁹ Her treasure and her gift became one. It was at this moment in which the parents of Jesus opened up their eyes and learned that the gift God blessed them with was revolutionary. This gift was non-traditional. This gift is lifelong and intentional on building the Kingdom God without the legalist views of religion. Jesus had been born to serve the purpose of providing life to all that will trust Him as Lord and Savior.

From this moment on, the parents of Jesus were focused on developing their gift. The author supports the idea that Mary and Joseph became transformed because Jesus was noted by Saint Luke as increasing in stature and wisdom; plus Jesus obtained favor with God and men.¹⁰ This would suggest that Mary and Joseph were the leaders of the favor given to Jesus among all mankind. The members of the body of Christ are obligated to take the lead in demonstrating the favor of Jesus. This can only be accomplish if the people of God would embrace their God-given gifts and manifest them in the community. The parenting has to change in order for the generation curse of spiritual irresponsibility to be broken.

As the life of Jesus continued to transition into adulthood, Jesus would not selfishly keep the wisdom and favor He obtained to Himself. Instead, Jesus sought out disciples to pass the wisdom of God. This would lead Jesus into becoming a spiritual parent, in which He provided the revolutionary model that transformed the way spiritual parenthood should demonstrated. When Jesus came onto the scene and began his public

⁹Lk 2:51.

¹⁰Lk 2:52.

ministry, He immediately began to do things that were not customary within the tradition of religious law.

After Jesus selected His first group of disciples, He made it very clear that ministry should be delivered in a more loving way. The love of Jesus impacted the selection process of people that would be forever known as the original disciples. These men were not graduates of any school of religion. Jesus selected people that were not teachers or students of the law. Jesus demonstrated that the responsibility of the real spiritual parent has to be one that embraces the unique gifts of all God's children through love. Jesus sent the disciple to go after the lost sheep. There was special emphasis on staying away from the practices of tradition, but instead passionately pursue the children of God. The message that they were instructed to give was the very first message that Jesus preached, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand."¹¹

The method that Jesus used in training His disciples was driven by His passion to teach. Jesus spent more time teaching the disciples than anything else. They were often sat down on many occasions to be taught. This would suggest that spiritual parents have the responsibility to teach those that are identified as spiritual children. Even though Jesus rebuked the disciples in times of their wrong, the process of correction was never to abuse His spiritual children. Instead, Jesus would teach them by building them back up. Teaching was so important to Jesus that he often use parables to explain His message because it was essential for disciples to understand that there is no excuse for failure. The moments of teaching were always in an environment that was away from the platform of preaching. Jesus never used the platform of preaching to embarrass his spiritual children.

¹¹Mt 10:7.

The tradition of religion has a history of relationships that has caused people in spiritual authority to abuse those that are subject to them. The religious leaders during the time of Jesus did not agree with the approach of Jesus. However, Jesus' method of training and teaching changed life at a rapid pace. This unorthodox style cause tension within the religious sector forcing those same religious leaders to be more focused on fame rather than change. People were changing through the life of Jesus. Instead of celebrating the souls coming to Christ, the religious leaders became angry and did what they were accustomed to doing. They judge Jesus unjustly. That did not stop Jesus from instructing His disciples to "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give."¹²

The Promise

The promise that Jesus provides to the disciples regarding the application of the foundation of Christ as the Savior is guaranteed spiritual success. Jesus explains to the disciples that if the church is built on the foundation of Jesus Christ then when the attacks come they will not prevail. The scriptures that the author uses to support spiritual parenthood are linked to the direct teachings of Jesus Christ. When applied, the methods and principles can provide the structure require in building healthy churches and congregations.

History of Spiritual Parenting

Spiritual fatherhood is one of the ways in which God the Father manifests His infinite Love for us, because spiritual fathers are both an icon, a symbol, and a tangible reality of such love. Specifically, "those who oppose spiritual fatherhood deny that it is possible for the spiritual father to heal by the power and energy of

¹²Mt 10:8.

God. When the spiritual father considers his spiritual child to be a gift from God, and the spiritual child regards his spiritual father as God's gift to him, then the relationship between them functions properly.¹³

Spiritual parenting has been tossed around for centuries. Theologians have used this term in regards to the relationship between the mature individual and person that needs to be coached to maturity. There are many thoughts and ideas as it relates to spiritual parenting. Ultimately the universal conclusion is consistently revealed as God placing certain individuals in influential positions in the life of those that are called to do a great work. How this role is interpreted and implemented can be debated. However, the result and outcome of this position has been consistent through times and can be traced back to the relationships of many of the biblical heroes in both the Old and New Testament.

God as the creator and first person in the trinity teaches in the people in the book of beginnings that spiritual parenting is essential for personal development. It is through the love of God that mankind was created and instructed to be fruitful and multiply. As a result of the fall of mankind, as children are birth into this world the parent is given the responsibility to lead and guide as God instructed. This responsibility is more than just physical. This responsibility is more spiritual.

God even demonstrated this reality by introducing Jesus as the second person in the trinity to give the people of God as physical example to the importance of this spiritual plan of life. Throughout the life of Jesus Christ, He often referred to His Father in Heaven for clarity and direction. Even though Jesus was God manifested in the flesh, Jesus was subject to a perfect God for instruction and direction. If Jesus was subject to

¹³Nafpaktos Hierotheos, *The Illness and Cure of the Soul* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010), 136.

the instruction and training of God the father, then that would automatically suggest that the people of God rely on those mature individuals that God has placed in spiritual parental roles are equipped to lead those that seek maturity in the arena of spiritual growth.

The idea of having a spiritual parent is a two-way street. This would imply that the spiritual parent is aware of a spiritual child and the spiritual child is aware of the spiritual parent. By acknowledging the roles gives both parties the opportunity to allow the manifestation of God's love in the relationship to encourage accountability and discipleship. Unfortunately, there are many sons and daughters that are being birth in ministry, but find themselves as orphans. In the church today there are many people of various ages that feel the power of God in their life, but have nobody to help then cultivate that anointing. Therefore they are left to figure it out on their own.

The danger in this negligent behavior is the spiritual sons and daughters never receiving that mentor or coach in the gospel. When this happens the spiritual sons and daughters take those gifts and either bury them or use them in secular arenas in which God does not get the glory. This reality closely resembles the result of what happens in the physical home when the parent is absent.

Jonas Clark, the founder of Spirit of Life Ministries, attempts to address spiritual parenting by drawing comparisons to the physical relationship of parents and children in the real world to that of the Christian community. One of the comparisons that Jonas provides is the unfortunate reality that in today's society fathers are abandoning their wives, children and responsibilities. The author agrees that this is a reflection of the spiritual condition of our world as the same patterns of abandonment are taking place in

ministries all over the world. Jonas notes that over 1500 pastors quit ministry each month and thousands more leave churches without cause.¹⁴ The reason behind this terrible fact is linked to the position of leadership being occupied by those that are not prepared for such a role.

When people are in positions of authority and they are not equipped, the author believes that this can do more damage to the child than it can good. This obviously leads to shame. When shame becomes a factor other concerns will erupt. Jonas Clark believes that the leader can become insensitive and develop callous.¹⁵ This is a great comparison and terrible fact. When leader's hearts become hard and they lack concern for their children the ministry becomes ineffective and broken. As a result, just like with the broken homes physically, it becomes that much more difficult for the sons and daughters of the ministry to flourish and grow. It actually places them at risk to becoming less productive in the Christian community and a target for Satan's attacks.

Following God's Plan

We would never say that being a spiritual father in the life of another is our doing; it is Christ in us by the power of His Holy Spirit. We are simply instruments, as a scalpel in the hands of a physician. No one gives the knife the credit—it's the doctor who gets all the credit and praise. So, in being a spiritual father, to Him goes all the glory, praise and honor. We are simply instruments being used by the Great Physician and Heavenly Father. Our job as an instrument is to help people attain their purpose here on earth—to know and grow in Christ and to build spiritual fathers! In other words, to become spiritual reproducers.¹⁶

¹⁴Jonas Clark, *Benefiting from Spiritual Fathers*, accessed June 2013, <http://www.jonasclark.com/christian-life/benefiting-from-spiritual-fathers.html>, 2010.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Dan Schaffer, *Only in His Power*, accessed June 2013, <http://buildingbrothers.org/news>, Building Brothers, Inc. 2010.

The plan of God is quite simple when it comes down to what the actions and results are in spiritual parenting. The role of the parent is to be as Dan Schaffer says, “The Instrument.” By recognizing that the spiritual parent is an instrument of God, this symbolizes the acceptance of being a humble servant. It is very important that spiritual parents understand that they are not God. Attempting to make the spiritual child resemble the spiritual parent and not God is what is causing the God given gifts to become diluted and unproductive. This would indicate the reasoning of why there is such a high rate of position and title driven ministers of the gospel versus those who are inspired to pursue God.

The goal of the spiritual parent has to be to point the child to God and the life of Jesus Christ. When this act is achieved then the creator God gets the glory and not the creation. Unfortunately, this is a day in time were the spiritual parents want to take credit for the birthing of the ministries within the spiritual children as though they are the creator. It is not to take away from the role that the spiritual parent plays in the life of the one being mentored; however, God should be the one to get the glory for the administration of the gifts. Neither the spiritual parent of the spiritual child should attempt to steal the glory from God. When the spiritual parent becomes intentional about training the child, they do not have to worry about competing with Satan’s plan to stop the reproduction of future spiritual parents. Should this process be successful, society can avoid the statistics that prevent progress in the community and within the church.

Today it is very difficult to tell the difference between the church and the community based the proof of production of both arenas. The church has been challenged and charged by the apostle Paul to be difference than the world and to transform the

world in the image of God.¹⁷ Instead the world is placing its imprint on the church. Sadly enough, the spiritual make-up of the church and the community are a reflection of each other. “A lack of fathers in the home is the main social problem facing America says seventy-two percent of those polled. In 2006 there were twelve million one parent families in the United States, ten and a half million single mother families and two and a half million single father families. Just over sixty-seven percent of the nation’s seventy-three million children younger than eighteen lived with two married parents. The results are grimly revealing. Children that have broken homes are:

- Five times more likely to commit suicide.
- Thirty-two times more likely to run away.
- Fourteen times more likely to commit rape.
- Nine times more likely to drop out of high school.
- Twenty times more likely to end up in prison.

The outcome of a broken home is lawlessness.”¹⁸

Jonas Clark reminds the spiritual parent that when they are absent and / or the relationship is broken then the church becomes likely to reproduce some of the most horrific statistics that reflect failure and dysfunction. However, the pressure of spiritual parents should model the role of the biological parent without replacing the biological parent. “Spiritual fathers do not replace natural fathers.”¹⁹ The author agrees with Clark that it is not the role of the spiritual father to take the place of the biological father. The

¹⁷Ro. 12:2.

¹⁸Jonas Clark, *Benefiting from Spiritual Fathers*, accessed March 2013, <http://www.jonasclark.com/christian-life/benefiting-from-spiritual-fathers.html>.

¹⁹Ibid.

roles are similar, but operate in two different sectors. Spiritual father should serve the role the spiritual mentor and life coach.

The author believes that the difference between the spiritual parent and the biological parent is the how they provide. The biological parent is the provider of life's needs. However, the spiritual parent is the provider of the spiritual needs. "Spiritual fathers are mentors that offer wise and trusted counsel designed to get one to think."²⁰ The relationship of the biological family is not optional. The relationship with the spiritual family is voluntary. There are however, many similarities. Both the spiritual and the biological parents draw similarities and are responsible for correction, accountability, discipline, reward. "Spiritual fathers do not replace the relationship with God. They point [the child] toward dependency on the Lord and away from themselves. It is Jesus that is the author and finisher of faith."²¹ By focusing all attention on God, the parent is able to ensure the child is often reminded that their life is all about pleasing God and advancing the Kingdom of God.

The Benefit of Adoption

When Jesus came to the earth He gave the children of God to all become adopted into the family of God and receive all the rights. When this adoption process takes place, the children of God are now entitled to all the rights and privileges of Jesus Christ. This birthing process comes through the salvation process. Once this is complete, the real work begins. The author believes that the process to become adopted into the body of Christ requires confession and believing. The author also believes that the process of

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

maintaining those rights requires profession and practical application. When the work is being executed, then there are benefits that come to the child.

Jonas Clark provides five benefits for the spiritual child. The five benefits include training from a spiritual father, protective oversight, prodding for spiritual and emotional growth, preparation for inheritance, and correction.²²

1. Training, Counsel, and Experience

A spiritual father is a gift to you from the Holy Spirit. Spiritual fathers are competent and seasoned through trial and experience. They have passed through places in life that you have not yet been. It would be nice to counsel with someone that has experience in what you are facing?

2. Protection from Demonic Wiles

Spiritual fathers provide protective oversight to their sons and daughters. Inattention is not healthy for anyone. Because of their experience they often see things that you cannot and their vision offers protection from evil wiles and demonic onslaught.

3. Success and Achievement

Spiritual fathers provide a safe environment to grow. Fathers train and prepare their sons and daughters for transition from adolescence to adulthood. They get you to think. Everyone gets older but not everyone matures. Maturity is vital in your life and spiritual fathers will put a demand on you to grow. Spiritual fathers inject a spirit of excellence in their sons and daughters. Demand is good for you and helps you face personal challenges that buffet success and achievement. As you submit to their instruction you will enter new levels of triumph. Expect them to motivate you to set goals and achieve objectives.

4. Inheritance

Apathy is deadly and kills spiritual momentum. Growth is needed if you are going to receive your inheritance. Not heavenly inheritance, but full accomplishment of your unique calling. An inheritance is what rightfully belongs to you, benefits. Everyone has been given a gift, something specific that God has called you to do with your life. Many never discover that gift but with the guidance of a spiritual father you will find your purpose and make a difference with your life. Scripture

²²Ibid.

declares that we are under tutors and governors until we come into our sonship. Like spiritual fathers, tutors give private instruction and governors regulate your progress.

5. Correction

No one likes correction but everyone needs it. Correction helps us improve and compliance is proof of sonship. How do you know if you are a real son or daughter? You know by your response to correction. Scripture identifies true sons in contrast to illegitimate sons by their ability to receive correction from the father and make necessary course adjustments. If you can't handle correction you are not a spiritual son or daughter. And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons. My son do not make light of the Lord's discipline and do not lose heart when he rebukes you because the Lord disciplines those he loves and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons" (Heb 12:5-8).²³

Pulpit Misrepresentation

The shame that the church faces today has been magnified by many acts of clergy misrepresentation. The major issues that surround the church today are not whether or not the church is using sound doctrine. However, the issues that have created a dark cloud for the church are related to the scandals in the parish that are administered from the pulpit. Misconduct within the church have been related to but not limited to finances, sex, and neglect. Due to lack of character, integrity, and respect to the act of the cross; ministry leaders are falling victim to temptations in the ministry. There are many temptations that happen within the church. When a leader has authority and power, it becomes a magnet of attraction. Satan uses these as opportunities to bring shame against the goodness of God and the perception of the community the church seeks to draw.

²³Ibid.

When David was in a sexual encounter with Bathsheba, shame forced him to attempt to cover his sin. When carefully examining the sin of David with Bathsheba, it is clear that David was tempted and fell victim to temptation. The author argues that David abused the power that was granted by God to get what his flesh was drawn to. David was so shameful that he went so far as to have Bathsheba's husband killed to cover up his fault. It was not until after the accountability of Nathan that David came clean. Once he was exposed that is when the development and repentance process took place. Nathan told David, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme."²⁴

It is when those in authority sin against God that occasions are granted to the enemy to speak against the movement of God. In the same manner today, people are talking against the movement of God; not because of the message being preached, but because of the persons preaching the message. Within the last thirty years, the rapid increase of clergy and church leaders that are falling victims to sexual immorality and financial misconduct alone have created such great occasions for the enemy to push potential evangelist and future ministry leaders out of the church's doors. The media takes these situations and publicize them all over the airways, thus creating a dark cloud over the church steeple.

Child, alcohol and substance abuse have also contributed to this poor image of the pulpit. The question that the author raises is, can the pulpit consist of spiritual parents of integrity and character that honors God? The author does not raise this question to suggest that the church clergy and leaders are perfect. That is far from the truth.

²⁴2 Sm 12:14.

However, it is the perpetuation of premeditated unrighteousness and lack of true repentance that requires a model to be used as a method of prevention and accountability.

Louis Weeks of the Alban Institute provided a particular insight on ministry temptations that can definitely help educate the body of Christ on the realities of being prepared to handle and address the temptation of the enemy.

Critical assessment is extremely difficult to hear, and in many congregations there are deeply ingrained habits in place to avoid it. As a result, some members may speak negatively to friends but not confront lay or pastoral leaders. Others may simply fade into the woodwork, finding extra time to drink coffee and read the Sunday paper. Still others, voting with their pocketbooks, may continue to attend but fail to give, or give little of their time, talents, and money. Of course the best assessment is that which occurs instantaneously—in a spirit of freedom to disagree quietly on the spot or to point to better practices or interchanges. In the healthiest congregations, there is concerted administrative attention toward actively seeking out various and divergent ideas and points of view. They also keep asking, "How's it going?" and they make formal assessments.²⁵

One of the major points that Weeks brings to the surface is the attention on things that have nothing to do with the church or spiritual development. When the leaders do not put focus on what is important, this attitude creates a downward spiral to the lay leaders. When a lay member cares more about their title/position and their financial contributions they lose focus on accountability. The idea of formal assessments will almost always keep everyone aware of the reality that if temptations are trying to trap the individual, they will come out successful. The author simply argues that it would be better if those assessments were random. Due to the experience the author has in corporate America, he has learned that when someone knows that an audit of assessment is coming that can very well give room for the enemy to convince the person who has fallen victim to sin to

²⁵Louis B. Weeks, *Temptations in Ministry*, accessed February 2012, <http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=8683>, Alban Institute, 2008.

cover up and compact sinful behaviors. The author also believes that the assessments that are conducted are administered by individuals that are willing to safeguard the integrity of the ministry. The information has to be confidential and there has to be a method of restoration for the person who has fallen victim to the temptation. This type of behavior will create an environment that matches the life and influence of Jesus Christ.

The Call for Spiritual Parents

Where are the parents and leaders of the church? In the secular community, there is a shortage of teachers, mentors, role models, and leaders. More importantly there is an abundance of fathers that are missing. Dan Schaffer uses the similarities of biological fathers and spiritual fathers. The father in the world today is viewed by Schaffer to as existing, but missing in action.

The world seems to be full of men who have fathered children but yet are not “fathering” them. Fathering, in the true sense of the word, is to pour one’s self into his child and nurture or discipline him in love. This includes teaching, correcting, providing, affirming, and training him so that the child grows, matures, and becomes a healthy individual who can live and contribute within society. This man looks ahead to the time his children have children, which will afford him the opportunity to pour into his grandchildren’s lives and see them grow strong and healthy. This is how the cycle of life is able to continue.²⁶

This thought process of the biological parent is interestingly similar to that of the spiritual parent. In his description of spiritual fathering, Schaffer argues three levels of Christian growth: children, young men, and fathers.²⁷ This is a challenge for most because it requires the children to grow from being babies to mature adults in the right time.

²⁶Dan Schaffer, *Spiritual Fathering*, accessed March 2012, <http://buildingbrothers.org/news>, Building Brothers, Inc., 2010.

²⁷Ibid.

Unfortunately, there exists a world that has consistently produced fathers and parents that remain babies in spirit even though that may be adults by age.

As history continues to unfold, it is essential that the foundation of spiritual parents be set in stone (the Rock of Jesus). There are many different reasons for this problem. There has not been a model that has been created that has been considered full proof. Considering the magnitude of what has happened to the church throughout history, knowledge of this foundational truth will help build a structure that withstands the attack of the enemy. The question has to continue to be asked, what is keeping our men from pursuing God?²⁸ When this question is asked, it allows for building to continue. The building process of the kingdom of God is the focus. The body of Christ has to avoid the demolition of the church. The body of Christ has to fight to save the building. One of the most important parts of this construction is the leader. When the head is destroyed so is the body. The house must be protected.

Theological Foundation

Throughout the history of the church, theologians have provided a number of views on the idea of spiritual parenting. Though it could be argued the role of spiritual parenting goes back to the establishment of the church, it also unfortunately reveals the many years associated with the lack of care demonstrated from this office. So in response to this problem, the author draws on the conversation that has been going on for centuries regarding the scholars and theologians of the church.

²⁸Dan Schaffer, *Building Men Into Mature Leaders: A Foundational Issue for the Church*, March 2012, <http://buildingbrothers.org/news>, Building Brothers, Inc., 2010.

In the nineteenth century, a certain group of theologians challenged the church by comparing the role and respect given to the physical parent to that of spiritual parents. The assignment given by God to the children of God to respect and honor their parents was written in the biblical statutes. The message included honoring the mother and father. That message also included reframing from cursing your parents. This group of theologians suggests that same mindset has to be transferred from the home to the church.

If the divine oracle says, concerning our parents according to the flesh, “Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee;” and, “He that curseth his father or his mother, let him die the death;” how much more should the word exhort you to honor your spiritual parents, and to love them as your benefactors and ambassadors with God, who have regenerated you by water, and endued you with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, who have fed you with the word as with milk, who have nourished you with doctrine, who have confirmed you by their admonitions, who have imparted to you the saving body and precious blood of Christ, who have loosed you from your sins, who have made you partakers of the holy and sacred Eucharist, who have admitted you to be partakers and fellow-heirs of the promise of God! Reverence these, and honor them with all kinds of honor; for they have obtained from God the power of life and death, in their judging of sinners, and condemning them to the death of eternal fire, as also of losing returning sinners from their sins, and of restoring them to a new life.²⁹

These theologians take the stand to suggest that the parent has to be responsible for the life they are leading. It is required of the parent to feed, nourish, provide, care for, and guide by protecting the child from the eternal flames of hell. This is no different than the expectation for biological parents or legal guardians. The law of the land will hold the parent accountable for failing to demonstrate these acts of parenting. The church should reflect the same image.

²⁹A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, A. C. Coxe, Ed., *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume VII: Fathers of the Third and Fourth Centuries: Lactantius, Venantius, Asterius, Victorinus, Dionysius, Apostolic Teaching and Constitutions, Homily, and Liturgies* (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 463.

Church as Family

The Apostle Paul and his sons in the ministry cared for their converts as a nursing mother gently cares for her little children. “This detailed illustration provides a good example for all who are responsible for the care of new believers.” If a nursing mother does not feed herself, she cannot feed her baby. If she eats certain foods, her baby will get sick. Similarly the spiritual diet of a parent Christian is vitally important to the health of a newer Christian. The gentleness and unselfishness of Paul as a spiritual parent shines through in this illustration.³⁰

The role of the spiritual parent is more than just having a title. It is about caring for a soul. Walvoord and Zuck provide a great illustration to place this thought into perspective. When a nursing mother consumes anything, it will have an impact on the child. The author however contends this illustration because it only focuses on the new believer. The spiritual parent’s role has new believer, experienced/elder believers, and believers that behave as new believers. In this instance the Apostle Paul actually challenged his sons in the ministry to exercise discipline with those that are under their leadership. The Apostle also warned his sons in the ministry against an extended period of nursing. At some point the child has to transfer to meet and demonstrate growth.

The spiritual home has to become more than just a place where people gather. The spiritual home must be a place of total development. Osbeck stated, “Home should be the holy of holies in a person’s life, a place where ultimate love and acceptance are found between parents and with the children.” This love the Osbeck speaks of is a mature and complete form of love. This love is persistent in growing. This love protects against

³⁰J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 246.

outside attacks against the home in an effort to keep the home safe for the spirit of God to be welcomed.

Many of the challenges that come along with any new ministry are the balance that families have in their life. When balance is missing in the life of the people that make up the church it creates dysfunction in the home. This dysfunction transitions into the church. The real test of a parent's spirituality is his home life and the daily demonstration of a Christ-like character. The responsibility of parents is not only to feed and clothe children's bodies, but to nurture their spirits, their minds, and their moral values. By word and by personal example parents must carefully guide children and fervently seek to show them what it means to be a Christian.³¹

One of the many breakdowns that the church and families experience in effective parenting is communication. A good parent-child relationship also involves maintaining strong lines of communication between all members of the family. When individuals in the home lack communication, it leaves the door for demonic spirits to separate and divide the home. The only resolution to this issue is to make good use of the time that is spent together. This demands quality time spent together in discussions, social times, daily spiritual retreats, and weekly periods of instruction and worship in the local church.³² The implementation of this quality time is an important key of successful family chemistry.

John MacArthur introduced another view of communication. He focused on communication in love and not abuse. The argument that is presented challenges those

³¹K. W. Osbeck, *Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1990), 162.

³²*Ibid.*, 163.

that lack the passion of caring for what belongs to God. The author supports this view due to the reality that it is all but crazy to imagine that one would abuse what belongs to God. Many children of God, regardless of age, are often victims of abuse. MacArthur calls this effective demonstration of love submission of the parent. He believes the parent has to be submissive to the instructions in the Word of God that express disappointment in parents that provoke their children to wrath. Parents are to lead the rule but are also to submit to their children with loving, spiritual authority that does not abuse them.³³

The discussion of how to best reach the children of God in the twenty-first century has become more of a challenge. Eugene Peterson and Calvin Miller believe that spiritual parents have to be creative. While the author agrees with this notion, he is not in full support of the rationale behind most creative practices. Creativity is important because it is a characteristic of the Creator—God. The challenge enters into the equation when the church attempts to relax the principles of the gospel to cater to the methods of the world. The Apostle Paul encourages the church at Rome not to be conformed to the world. However, he firmly dares them to be transformed by the renewal of the mind. This way of thinking relies solely on God to guide the creative behaviors when attempting to reach others. Sometimes it does not require being creative. Sometimes the parent simply has to bring the child if they need to get to Jesus.³⁴ However, if the child is no longer dependent on the parent this may require tapping into the gifted area in which God has blessed the parent to engage the child.

³³J. MacArthur, *The Fulfilled Family* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1997), 201.

³⁴E. H. Peterson and C. Miller, *Weddings, Funerals, and Special Events: Leadership Library*, vol. 10 (Waco, TX: CTI; Word Books; Distributed by Word Books, 1987), 139.

The frustrations that are associated with being a pastor over God's children cause many pastors to want to give up. To avoid taking the path of defeat, Max Anders uses the message of grace to justify the forgiven spirit extended to God's children. All of the people of God, at some point, needed grace. With the many children, despite the age, causing issues in the house of God, pastors must demonstrate this characteristic of patience. Max Anders also notes five principles of grace which are:

- Grace is the spiritual parent of the Christian believer.
- External rules and restrictions are an indication of childhood immaturity.
- Reverting to the law is regressing to spiritual childhood.
- Grace gives you a deeply personal relationship with God.
- Grace brings believers together, while law separates God's family.³⁵

The message of grace opens the door and allows forgiveness to come into the house of God. Considering human nature, grace must flood God's house. People are going to make mistakes. Principles number four and five are strongly supported by the author. Grace will show you where you are in God. Grace will also bring the people of God together. When a ministry is strictly an enforcer of the law, it will in fact separate the family of God.

How can the relationship between the parent and child be effective? There are many thoughts, ideas, methods, and suggested practices to ensure the house of God is promoting healthy growth. James Packer sets the stage for order in the home by offering support to effective structure. The Apostle Paul shared, "Do not exasperate your children [and you] must not goad your children to resentment, but give them the instruction, and

³⁵M. Anders, *Galatians-Colossians: Holman New Testament Commentary*, vol. 8 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 54.

the correction, which belong to a Christian upbringing.”³⁶ The church must realize that God, who is a father—Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of all Christians through him—cares about families enormously. Family life, with its built-in responsibilities for both parents and children, is part of his purpose for all, and the way we behave as children and parents is a prime test of both our humanity and our godliness.³⁷ The caring love of parents who respect their children and want to see them mature and the grateful love of children who respect their parents and want to see them content is a great need for the church family.

It is extremely crucial for Christian families to understand the ways leading a Christian home. The damage of the home now may truly require relearning what it means to live in a God-fearing home. In the West, yesterday’s extended family has shrunk to today’s nuclear family; social security and community affluence have reduced the family’s importance as an economic unit; and all this has weakened family relationships.³⁸ Packer argues that everyone is so into themselves that the family suffers and does not have time for togetherness. Due to parents/pastors being so busy, when a disconnection becomes prevalent in the home/church, children often think their parents are as Packer describes as old fuddy-duddies. In the church this has been going on for a long time. Many parishioners believe that pastors have lost their relevancy. And pastors are thinking that the parishioners have no respect. For the church to grow in Christ, the order has to be established.

³⁶Co. 3:21; Ep. 6:4.

³⁷J. L. Packer, *Growing in Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, Tyndale House, 1995), 211.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 266.

Packer also identifies the Christian home as a spiritual unit. The family has a built-in authority structure whereby the husband is leader to the wife and the parents are leaders to the children. All leadership is a form of ministry rather than of tyranny, and these domestic leadership roles must be fulfilled in love.³⁹ The family has to be a community of teaching and learning about the righteousness of God.

Being able to understand the difference between a child and an adult in Christ helps in spiritual development and growth. In the church, there are newborn Christians, who are dependent upon the spiritual parents in the church, and mature Christians, who don't require as much regular pastoral direction. Some people will require more attention than others to ensure that they being groomed and disciplined. Giving proper pastoral care to people means helping them become independent in faith in a healthy way. The goal is to get each parishioner to the place of maturity. Maturity means the people will increasingly take responsibility for their own spiritual growth.⁴⁰ When a church has reach the place in which individuals are taking responsibility for their own spiritual growth, this becomes the indicator that alerts that pastor of a parishioner demonstrating wholesome growth.

The goal of the church family is to draw families to the person of Jesus Christ in an attitude of genuine repentance and renewal. There is nothing that brings husbands, wives, and children together more effectively than a face-to-face encounter with the Creator of families. Every size of church has its contribution to make to the family body.

³⁹Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide*, 89.

⁴⁰B. Larson, P. Anderson, and D. Self, *Mastering Pastoral Care: Mastering Ministry* (Portland, OR: Carol Stream, IL: Multnomah Press; Christianity Today, 1990), 120.

The unique make-up of the church offers many differences. However, all these differences in the body need the appropriate attention.

Some people thrive better in a crowd; they need the programs and specialists that can be provided only in a large church community. Adolescents, for example, are driven by this urge to herd, and they feel more secure with larger numbers of their peers.⁴¹ On the other hand, some people need the intimacy and personal touch of a small church family. Whatever the size of your church, the people must become family friendly.

The Warning

The author learned that scholars call attention to the traditional behaviors that are irresponsible because it ultimately damages the church. When the church is not focused on the behaviors of the people because the church is too focused on the non-edifying programs and events, problems migrate into the house of God. The problems that come in the house of God require immediate attention. If these problems are unattended, they can potentially become worse. Church problems are similar to physical problems. Should these problems go unattended, they grow and become worse. The danger in this situation is the potential of infecting more people. The church is a body; and what germs are to the physical body, sin is to the spiritual body.⁴² When the Apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonian church, he warned the idle busybodies to get to work. He also admonished the church leaders to warn them that are unruly. The word unruly refers to a soldier out of rank.

⁴¹M. Shelley, *Building Your Church Through Counsel and Care: 30 Strategies to Transform Your Ministry*, vol. 3 (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1997), 121.

⁴²W. W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 235.

There are some unfortunate instances in which people in the house have to be removed. The author believes this is an area in which comparing the church to a home is a challenge for parents. Not many parents would agree to throw their children out of the house. However, if that child is a threat to the wellbeing of other children or the parent, extreme measure may have to be taken in order to ensure the home is safe for living. A problem does not always have to be physical danger. Problems can consist of insubordination, disrespect, or laziness. In the message to the Thessalonian church by the Apostle Paul regarding going back to work, this message had to be delivered because people that left their work were looking for the church to support them. The church has to warn the people against this type of behavior. Otherwise, many people will abuse the body of Christ for selfish gain.

Responsible behaviors have to be demonstrated consistently in the church family. In response to the nature of the original the first parents turned away from God, corrupted themselves, and brought themselves under the penalties of the law.⁴³ There is a price to pay with God when the instructions that are given where not followed. The danger is the domino effect. When the spiritual parents do not lead the homes effectively by first taken care their responsibilities assigned by God, the entire house becomes susceptible to danger.

Ronald Richardson offers understanding how congregations function emotionally in his book, *Creating a Healthier Church*. He argues without being simplistic, the need to improve the quality of life together and function more effectively in achieving mission goals. Richardson provides a theory about human behavior that will aid understanding of

⁴³A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Bellingham, WA, 2002), 582.

how things can get out of control in the human community of the church. He also shares a practical set of leadership ideas and behaviors. Lastly, he outlines a set of governing principles for how to behave in the midst of upsetting and conflicting circumstances. The author believes the personal steps, as outlined by Richardson, for leaders in the church to become more assertive in demonstrating positive forces for healing and cooperation, will give the church the safe place needed for growth.

Clearly, God's love for and redemptive activity on behalf of the world is one expression of the togetherness force in God.⁴⁴ The author agrees that togetherness will build the force necessary for the church family to thrive.

The Role of the Church

The church has to focus on the responsibility of effectively training the parishioners. When the church experiences real training versus masking the image of Christian training, the body of Christ will have more spiritual people who can exercise the power of God. Moreover, the body of Christ will eliminate many of the practices that drive religious behavior. Randy Stinson and Timothy Jones have done extensive research in the area of equipping families for ministry. They make the correlation of parent-child and church-family very well. Stinson and Jones craft a theological perspective that supports the author's argument of the responsibility of parents disciplining their children. While the act of discipline is something that is not embraced by one's level of comfort, it is necessary.

⁴⁴Ronald W. Richardson, *Creating a Healthier Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), 61.

There is nothing is more important for most Christian parents than the spiritual well-being of their children. When the children thrive, parents rejoice; when children fail, parents weep. Therefore nothing is more spiritually potent in the lives of children than churches and parents intentionally working in tandem to mature these young saints.⁴⁵ The collaboration between the spiritual parents and the church is the exact same situation. While sharing on the subject of the body of Christ, the Apostle Paul shared with the Corinthian church the point that all the people of the body of Christ are important. The eye cannot tell the feet there is no need for the feet. Instead, every area of the body is important and requires attention. He goes on to suggest that if one part of the body is hurting we all hurt. Many people in the church are hurting. However, the spiritual parents have to embrace this hurt. Instead, spiritual parents are pushing their children out of the door. Or, if the children are not being pushed out, they are not getting the attention required. When the body is sick, immediate attention is required to avoid a more serious injury.

Stinson and Jones idea of family ministry also aligns with the author's promotion of functional homes equaling functional churches. They believe that if the families are together and following God, accountability practices will be supported by the congregation of the church and the local family. The process of intentionally and persistently coordinating a congregation's proclamation and practices enables parents to informed, trained, and held accountable as primary disciple-makers in their children's lives.⁴⁶ This setup will allow accountability to take place from both the pulpit and the

⁴⁵R. Stinson and T. P. Jones, *Trained in the Fear of God: Family Ministry in Theological, Historical, and Practical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal Publications, 2011), 88.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 15.

pew. This model that is presented by Stinson and Jones is a matter of equipping the family. It is not assuming that knowledge is in place. It is taking the responsible actions to develop and implement solutions. It is getting away from just coming to church and saying the time was great. It is taking all the necessary steps to educate, instruct, and discipline. The wholesome family experience is about wanting more and doing everything it takes to promote growth.

The wholesome family experience is also includes taking care of the business of the family. If the parents do not know how to effectively budget, the family will run the risk of accumulating debt. Being an effective parent and providing for your children also includes making sure all the lights work, food is on the table, and the house payment is in on time. Being an effective parent means the children will have arrangements made for all events and functions. In the church today, many spiritual parents are only showing up to preach.

In many of the African-American charismatic-Pentecostal churches the parishioners are okay with the parent only showing up to preach them happy and they go home to nothing. This irresponsible behavior is the equivalent of a family in which the parent only brings home desert without a complete meal, does not instruct the children to do homework, does not pay attention to the children's interactions in or outside the home, does not pay the bills, do not communicate on a personal level and expects the house to be productive.

The actions of the church are an indication that neglect is taking place in many of the churches in America. The spiritual children are growing up fatherless or motherless. The spiritual children are growing up to learn that their spiritual parents said they loved

them, but only found out the parent had become guilty of saying a word that did not have the same meaning as the child. Now the spiritual children across America must decide to break the repetition of neglect and implementing the correct way to demonstrate love.

The spiritual parents that understand the importance of effective growth must remain intentional about developing the congregations. No one is more influential in children's spiritual, social and behavioral development than parents.⁴⁷ The pastor should be the most influential individual in the congregation to the parishioners. People may join churches because a friend invited them or maybe they were born in the church. However, as that person gets older and/or spends a little more time in that ministry they will determine if they are going to stay based on the relationship with the spiritual parent. Many times this becomes an emotional decision. If the person feels good they stay. Instead, this should be a decision based off results and true love. If the spiritual parent provides the environment and relationship needed for that spiritual child, the child should stay.

The leadership of the spiritual parent should not be influenced by the emotion of whether or not the child is going to stay or not. If the parent raises the child in the admonition of the Lord, even though it may be tough the parent might have to let the child go. This is never an easy decision, but it is the right decision. When the story of the prodigal son is told, the text never indicates that the father begged the child to stay. Too often pastors are begging people to stay because they have not been held accountable so they rely on every dime because they are not sure if the church mortgage can be paid if the deacon chairman leaves.

⁴⁷Ibid., 17.

Spiritual parents have to do what is right by God and the children they are responsible for. By following this process the father allowed the prodigal son to leave. Even though the father was emotionally bothered by the leaving of his child as determined by his actions to stand out and look for his son to return. When the seed is planted of righteousness, the child will return. In that story, Jesus shares that the son hit rock bottom and came to himself. The author believes that the more pastors and spiritual parents that challenge their children in the way of righteousness, the more churches will have productive wholesome family relationships.

Stinson and Jones, recognize this movement as parents taking the mantle in training the children to be effective. These ideas suggest that the process has methods that were already correct. However, somewhere along the way the process became flawed. The author believes the inflation of jealous hearted pastors negatively impacted the successful planting of new churches. Another contributing factor is the rise in churches that are starting because of hurt versus God instructing the individual to plant. If God is calling one to be a spiritual parent, it is vital that the person understand the full range of assignments that come with this task. Even if full understanding is not discovered in the beginning, the new spiritual parent should pursue revelation daily. God will provide.

The church plant has to keep certain principles in mind. The church has to be committed to building and equipping missional families by focusing on encouraging the biblical task to expand the borders of the realm wherein the Lord was present, known, served, and worshipped.⁴⁸ The mission will keep the church plant acknowledging the point of why God birthed the ministry. Author and theologian, Joseph Hellerman writes,

⁴⁸Ibid., 33-34.

traditional church leaders and emerging church visionaries alike, believing what is detailed about Jesus' original vision for authentic Christian community will deeply satisfy the relational longings of both audiences.⁴⁹ The mission has to be in the forefront of the mind or ministry will lose its identity and become self-promoting. Shortly after many church plants start the focus quickly shifts from God and the mission to personal self-gratification.

New church plants have been going on since the establishment of the first century church. Spiritual parenting has been going on long before the church came along. In fact spiritual parenting began with the first parents. Considering people are spiritual beings, God had a plan for the parent to take care of the child. That mission became the mission of the church. The caring for the child is defined as love. This love is unconditional and represents the Agape love that Jesus demonstrated on the cross. Uniquely, Jesus does not expect for the parents of the church to die for the church. Jesus already did that, plus it would not do anything for a spiritual parent to die for the spiritual child.

What God does require is complete love be given to the children of God. Love is not robbing the people. Love is abusing the people. Love does not hate the people. Love is not neglecting the people. Love does not remind people of recorded wrongs. Love is about giving up the life and mission of the world and living a life that represents the life and mission of Jesus Christ. Passing this love on to the children of God is the source of life.

⁴⁹Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2009), 29.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The researcher is the pastor of PLCC. This church began in February of 2012. This was one month after the researcher began his Doctor of Ministry studies at United Theological Seminary. After returning to launch this church plant, the research learned throughout his journey, there were wounded people joining the church in large numbers. After learning the reason many people were joining the church had to do with spiritual abuse and neglect, the research then understood the purpose of his assignment. This project focuses on accomplishing and fulfilling the assignment on building an effective discipleship model for new church plants.

Problem Statement

The problem in new church plants is the large percentage of undisciplined longtime church attendees joining the church. This has an adverse effect on the ministry due to the lack of spiritual training and development. The problem is further perpetuated through the combined actions of untrained clergy in the pulpit and the undisciplined members in the pews. When these actions are not appropriately addressed, the circulation of hurting people continues while the church suffers in unhealthy practices. Through the execution

of qualitative research, a common research method used when conducting exploratory research, methods of data triangulation will be used to validate the findings of this project.

Project Purpose

PLCC, a growing new church plant in Memphis, Tennessee, is the ministry context for this project. The purpose of this project study proves when a new church plant has an effective model for discipleship for its new members; the church will demonstrate spiritual growth and development by embracing practices of accountability.

Hypothesis

The researcher learned through a personal struggle of his past, the necessity for holistic practices of accountability within the church. The definition of this holistic approach to ministry is identified through the findings of this project. The project hypothesizes that when clergy is held accountable to fulfilling the responsibility of spiritual parenting, the irresponsible behaviors within the parish are reversed and the trends of abuse are erased through the discipleship of God's love being perfected in God's people. The model for this study further proposed that when parishioners are nourished through biblical principles that promote accountability, they embrace the task of reinforcing positive trends that support spiritual and church growth. This model projects demonstrates a rejection of church as usual. Instead this project proves that the irresponsible trends that are created by ineffective religious systems can be avoided in new church plants. This qualitative study captures the ability for new church plants to empower its members to receive spiritual parenting that promotes spiritual growth.

Researcher Role

The researcher used a qualitative approach in order to investigate the involved issues. The selection of a qualitative approach was met by the researcher serving as the facilitator and presenter for the overall study conducted at PLCC. The study consisted of the facilitator conducting interviews, collecting testimonials regarding the ministry experience, pre and post-tests from a Bible study series, and survey questionnaires for the leadership training.

Ministry Model Description

The ministry model created in this project study captures the relative process used to help those impacted by the ministry of PLCC to experience growth and not abuse or neglect spiritually. The outcome expected was achieved. This discipleship model for ministry consists of the steps required to launch and sustain a new church plant. The researcher provided the members of PLCC the opportunity to rejuvenate their participation in ministry and received the challenge to grow. The participants of this study are well aware of the work that goes into the implementation of a new church plant and the responsibility of each member to be committed to spiritual growth.

Project Measurements

The focus of this study consisted of a qualitative methodology. Within the ministry model developed, all the participants committed themselves to eight consecutive weeks of Bible study. The focus of this Bible study was to engage the participants in their commitment to learn the guiding principles of the church in which they became members

of. The Bible study series was entitled We Are PLCC. This series was broken up into three parts:

- Part One — Who Are We
- Part Two — We Are Children of God
- Part Three — We Are PLCC

In order to avoid the revolving church door and promote church growth, the efforts in this Bible study series also challenged the members of the congregation to understand what is expected of them as members and what is to be expected of the church.

The Bible study series created an environment for members to ask questions of clarity regarding the ministry versus making assumptions about the ministry. The material that was used for this Bible study series was the PLCC Membership Handbook (APPENDIX A). The PLCC Membership Handbook is an in-depth summary of the church Constitution and Bylaws. This exercise and study took the new members of the church through a process in which they were able to thoroughly understand the ministry they were a part of. The author used this measurement to ensure that a high percentage of the members joining the ministry would understand what it meant to be a member of a church family versus having a church identification number. From this Bible study, the member's traditional mindset of defining spiritual growth shifted from simply going to church on Sunday to embracing the reality that they are the church every day. A survey was used to evaluate this criterion (APPENDIX B).

The next method of qualitative data collection consisted of the researcher conducting leadership training seminars with the appointed leaders of PLCC. The

purpose of this exercise was to spend time with leaders in a safe environment to offer training one what it meant to be a leader at PLCC and clearly review the expectations for leaders and their responsibility to their appointment. Many of the participants that were appointed to leadership roles in prior churches operated with a title that did not require accountability. There were two weekend sessions that consisted of sixteen total hours of training. Within the training the researcher provided leadership covenants (APPENDIX C). The three leadership covenants at PLCC are provided to the Executive Board of Directors, Deacons, & Ministry Leaders. The researcher conducted pre and post-tests to evaluate this criterion.

The last measurement criteria used was leadership and ministry evaluations. As stated earlier, many individuals that were appointed to leadership positions were not familiar with methods of accountability to measure growth and development. The researcher used these criteria to ensure the ministry leaders understood what their ministry description (APPENDIX D) required. After a year of service in the ministry, each ministry leader would receive an evaluation review (APPENDIX E). The review process included the ministry leader receiving feedback from the pastor regarding the leaders previous year of service. These sessions were one-on-one interviews. This process allowed for relational spirit-filled critique. After the review was complete an interview (APPENDIX F) was conducted with each leader to gather their feedback to the recommendations for improvement.

Participants Study

The researcher had two different groups that were used to participate within this study. For the Bible study, the researcher gathered information from a focus group of

twenty participants; all of which were new members to PLCC. For the training sessions and interviews, the researcher gathered his information from the seventeen appointed church leaders.

Research Design Model

The first step was to gather material that would specifically assist the author in developing a solid church constitution and bylaws. In the state of Tennessee, there are certain forms of documentation that must be completed in order to ensure the operation of the ministry is established appropriately. There are five best practices that are provided by the state of Tennessee in the document entitled “What Every Board Member and Officer Should Know: A Guidebook for Tennessee Nonprofits.” Many churches that are started from the ground up may very well be a part of the divine calling of God. However, when the church is not setup appropriately the ministry assumes several risks. These risks could result in violations of the law, which ultimately will present the church in a negative light in the community.

The researcher believes that everything should be done decently and in order. The PLCC constitution and bylaws was created with the assistance of The Church Constitution Guide. After the development of the constitution and bylaws were complete, the second step required the researcher to then create a membership handbook to summarize the membership information and guidelines for the participants. From the development of the membership handbook, the researcher was able to create the survey. The researcher also collected testimonials from the participants.

Step three implementation was vital to the research. This step consisted of the researcher selecting seventeen leaders to appoint to implement the structure of the church

vision. After the selection of these individuals, they are required to attend two leadership training sessions. These sessions consists of teaching on the subject, The Qualifications of a Leader. The training was supported by a pre and post-test examination.

Step four also included the participation of seventeen appointed leaders. The researcher developed the ministry descriptions. After the year of service the reviews were conducted to analyze and critique spiritual growth. The interviews were used to generate feedback from the participants to ensure they received the spiritual assessment.

In an effort to created full transparency and accountability, the pastor and organizer of PLCC also acknowledges a covenant in which he would remain committed to. The Executive Board of Directors followed a process of accountability with the pastor in a respectful manner. This model does not suggests that the pastor follows the members, it simply creates a system of reporting that allows the Board of Directors the opportunity to ensure that the ministry headship is following the vision that God provided. This model does not create a democracy. Instead it ensures the successful implementation of Theocracy. The effective implementation of this tool within this model will allow the church to be able to function regardless of who the pastor is.

Other research that was conducted in the form of a case study (APPENDIX G) consisted of the researcher gathering data from other church planters in the city of Memphis. The researcher collected data from ten participants. This case study was used to help develop extended measures of accountability for the researcher and pastor of PLCC. Since the ministry of PLCC is a Non-Denominational ministry, the researcher's method to involve outside pastoral assistance from other church planters enabled him the opportunity to intentionally plan against irresponsible trends.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation that was selected to develop the researcher's measuring tools was determined through the case study collaboration that was conducted with the other members of clergy and church planters. After conducting this case study and pulling from the surveys, the researcher was able to develop the necessary questions to build this discipleship ministry model. All the questions that were used in the tests and interviews helped to shape the picture that was created from this work.

Data Collection and Analysis

The testimonials were collected to allow the researcher to capture the exact responses of the Bible study series from the participants to understand what they learned. The statement of the participants was gathered to analyze the reactions to the information that was presented during the Bible study series. One part of the testimonial also required the participants to provide information on their age, gender, and length of time in organized church. This process of administered at the end of the Bible study series.

The pre-test questionnaire (APPENDIX H) was used to provide the overall knowledge and understanding of leadership was to the participants. It also allowed the researcher to uncover the length of time in which the participants had spent in leadership at other church ministries. This questionnaire also revealed the gender. The purpose of this test was to create a common interest within the participants to engage in learning about leadership that will help grow the ministry of PLCC.

The post-test questionnaire (APPENDIX H) was used to verify progressive knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of the leaders. Many of the leaders were new to the positions of appointment. In order to ensure there were no gaps in the expectations

of their individual assignments, the post-test questionnaire measured significant levels of understanding of the leaders. The questions in the post-test support the pre-test questions in order to determine there was increased knowledge gained.

Interviews were conducted with the leaders in order to provide the ministry descriptions (APPENDIX D). After this, the leader had to successfully complete the leadership training. The training concluded with individual interviews with each leader to go over their specific job responsibility. In order to confirm agreement and understanding the leader and pastor acknowledge the form for accountability.

Leadership Reviews (APPENDIX E) is a standard practice in the workplace. This measuring tool helps to promote growth in performance. The researcher incorporated this tool to first provide feedback to the leader on their delivery of expectations throughout the year. A rating system would be used to indicate areas that needed improvement, areas that met the expectation, and areas that exceeded the expectation. Each review concluded with feedback and dialogue with the leader to ensure the information covered was received in love.

Finally, the researcher conducted a case study prior to implementing any other measuring tools. This case study was conducted on a group of church planters in the Memphis, Tennessee area. The information gained out of this case study proved that churches need methods of accountability in place to avoid the development of irresponsible behaviors manifesting itself in the church. The study also proved that measures of accountability produces and operation of excellence. The group of pastors that participated in this study actively led congregations that range from fifty members to over a thousand members. All the participants of this study also agreed to be apart after

acknowledging a participation waiver (APPENDIX I) in which their information would remain anonymous and the information provided was accurate.

Qualitative Validity

In order to ensure qualitative validity, the researcher satisfied this criterion by allowing the participants in the study to verify the result captured from their participation to review the findings. By allowing the final document to be viewed through the eyes of the participants, credibility was established. Transferability was established in this project by the researcher providing detail descriptions of the context central to the research. The researcher established dependability through the process of data triangulation. The researcher engaged with context associates, peer associates and professional associated to ensure confirmability. The process of confirmability allowed for those associated with the project to critique and challenges the findings of the project.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Collection of Data—The Case Study

This chapter offers the process by which the researcher documents this project. The entire study and data collection was conducted at PLCC. The data was gathered from interviews, testimonials, a case study, questionnaires (pre, post, and leadership training workshops), surveys, email, videos, voicemails, text messages, and blogs to document the spiritual growth and development of the participants. The overall process and methodology was created for the participants to see themselves as portrayed in the bible by God as the children of God. With the collaboration of other professional associates, the researcher created tools to inspire personal accountability and reflection within the participants.

The method of inquiry, as stated in chapter four, was a case study. The case study is “a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individual. The researcher collects detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time.” By using the case study the researcher was able to use several sources to implement successful data triangulation. All the “qualitative procedures demonstrate a different approach to

scholarly inquiry than methods of quantitative research. Qualitative inquiry employs different philosophical assumptions; strategies of inquiry; and methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation.”

The purpose of this case study was to document the feedback and participations provided to the researcher to initiate this project study. This process allowed the researched the opportunity to collect data from volunteer church planters to develop the framework for this study. Within this case study the researcher gathered information that helped to establish validity to the project. This case study was able to expose many weaknesses, failures, and flaws in the process used when establishing new church plants. Through the engagement of the case study, the researcher was able to plan the steps that needed to be taken within the context of PLCC to ensure trends of irresponsible spiritual parenthood were avoided. The questions that were answered by the ten participants were as follows:

- Why did you plant your church?
- Did you have the assistance of a parent church?
- How many members do you have currently?
- Explain your stance on Theological training?
- How many people did you start with?
- What challenges did you face when you first planted your ministry?
- Summarize official document of church statutes that govern your ministry?
- How do you know the members know what is expected from them?
- How do you fill your leadership positions filled?
- Explain ways your ministry leaders know what is expected of them?

- How do you know if your members know the vision of the church?
- Describe how denominational allegiance impacts your ministry?
- What is the pastoral process of accountability?
- If you have ever been involved in clergy misconduct (infidelity, theft, etc.), what do you think was the reason?
- Describe the top three reasons that contributed to your ministry success?
- What is your definition of spiritual parenting?
- Describe the relationship between you and your spiritual parent/pastor?
- What is the difference between ‘Church’ and ‘Family’?
- How do you measure spiritual growth?
- What is your position on church discipline?

Recruitment—Case Study

The researcher solicited the assistance of twenty pastors that planted their church ministry in the last fifty years. The researcher decided to use the first ten participants to respond to be included in this study. The recruitment was initiated through referrals. The researcher did not invite participants to participate in this study of whom he had any previous or current relationships with to avoid bias data. Instead, the researcher randomly selected twenty pastors that organized their ministry from the ground up to join this study. The final collection of ten participants confirmed via email they would be willing to participate. The researcher provided them with a participation waiver (Appendix I) that ensured the participant’s identity or their church identity would remain confidential. This waiver also served as a consent form. However, the collection of the data would be shared with the participants for validity.

The Process—The Case Study

After the participants confirmed their involvement, they were emailed the twenty questions. The researcher requested an expedited return of the questions to initiate the process of methodology. The participants had one week to return the questionnaire. The information was analyzed and share the results were shared with the participants via email. After sharing the final analysis of this case study with the participants, the researcher was ready to expand on the enlightening information this study revealed.

Analysis of Data—The Case Study

It is important to know that 80% of the participants in this study were African-American. The other 20% of the participants were Caucasian. This focus group of participants in this study was 60% male. All the participants stated their church plant was a God led decision. Within this study, 20% of the participants have fifty members or less; 30% have between fifty-one and 200 members; 30% have 201-500 members; 10% have 501-1000 members; and 10% have more than 1000 members.

Outcome—The Case Study

After the data was collected and analyzed, the following was determined in this case study:

- All the churches with currently less than 100 members did not receive any assistance from a parent church.
- Only half of the sample group believes theological training is important. All of those churches with less than 200 were against theological training.

- Only 20% of the churches planted had more than fifty people when they launched. And yet 80% of the participants have over fifty people now.
- The number one challenge that was listed by the participants is member retention. The next challenge was the lack of Love demonstrated at the church.
- Only 50% of the churches have a constitution and bylaws to govern the ministry. All of those ministries have over 200 members.
- If a position needs to be filled in the church, 60% of the pastors rely on spiritual guidance to make that decision. The other 40% just fill vacancies as needed with willing volunteers.
- Of all the churches, only 30% of them outlined expectations for leaders.
- Half of the pastors stated that they do not know if members know what the vision of the individual church is.
- The half that knows the vision has more than 150 members.
- The results also indicated that 80% of the participants have individuals they call their pastor.
- Over 60% of the pastors shared they have been involved in clergy misconduct. All attributed their fall to not having a measure of accountability.
- Of all the participants, 90% of them view spiritual parenting as caring for God's children
- The majority of the participants (80%) defined there is no difference between church and family.

The researcher processed the data only to realize that PLCC was not going to repeat the patterns of irresponsible behavior. This case study showed that not all pastors have accountability at the forefront of the ministry. Also the pastors believe that church should be synonymous with family, but are not being intentional about raising the children of God in a way that produces growth. Churches are neglecting the responsibility of taking care of the children God. The result is a revolving door of recycled people that

do not demonstrate discipline or accountability. The creation of this field study proved to be one of the most influential exercises for the researcher. After sharing the data with the participants, all agreed the information gathered was true and requires action inspired by God to reverse the trends that perpetuate irresponsibility.

The Discipleship Model Process and Implementation

The researcher created a three-step discipleship model for spiritual reformation and growth. After working with participants of the case study, the researcher concluded one area that required immediate attention in new church plants is addressing the revolving door of people that come in the front door and leave out the back door. The reason the author believes this happens is because churches fail to engage the new people when they come and meet them with the opportunity to develop their gifts. So, this three-step process required attention to be given to all God's children in an effort to promote and teach growth.

Once confirming from the participants in the case study that many new church members do not know what the vision of the church is or what is required from the people of the church in all positions, the researcher developed this model to address this problem at its core. The solution was in step one of the model. By creating a ministry that provided full disclosure of expectations empowered the members to take ownership in delivering vision. The successful result of this Bible study series was validated by the responses and growth of the members. Twenty random surveys were collected from the participants of the Bible study series. Some of the testimonials are as follows:

- Member #1: I joined PLCC because I was looking for a place where I could grow spiritually. The open arm acceptance and genuine feel of family showed me I found a church home. Since I have joined PLCC, I have learned God is the reason for all the favor in my life; having faith will protect me in all

situations; love for God and longing to grow will enhance my spiritual life. I believe this ministry is about true accountability, which means to embrace being held to a high standard. I have learned to take responsibility for my actions. The responsibility I must take is the responsibility to grow from drinking spiritual milk to eating spiritual meat. (Note: this member was a new convert and did not have a church home before coming to PLCC)

- Member #2: I have never been a part of a ministry that teaches its members about the expectations of God for the people. PLCC is a place where I have learned AGAPE Love, not to judge, and to be willing to serve God faithfully. The bible study series helped me to understand the structure of the church. I feel part of something real and not fictitious or full of hype. Most of all I have learned accountability means to take responsibility to the level of appreciation of others assisting me in living a righteous life. (Note: this member was a member of another church for thirteen years.)
- Member #3: I have never seen a membership handbook at a church. Most times people tell you to just do what you tell them. I joined PLCC because I can feel the anointing of God in this church. I have learned that my imperfections are not a reason to make an excuse. Instead it gives me a reason to grow and do better.
- Member #4: I joined PLCC because I was spiritually dead. While in prayer, God sent me to PLCC and I feel the presence of God walking in the door. I have learned accountability concerning the things of God, how to listen to the true Word of God, and that faithfulness always pays off.
- Member #5: I was new to the city of Memphis and needed a church home. PLCC is a family ministry that cares about its members and actively involved in the community. Our pastor is a true leader and man of GOD. Most of all, I have learned that true accountability is means we are responsible for one another, the church, and God.
- Member #6: I was a member of another church for more than seven years. I was spiritually dead and needed to be renewed. Many of the practices in my old church did not reflect an atmosphere of nurture. The spirit of God is in PLCC. I needed this ministry and God sent me here. I have learned accountability means to take ownership and being responsible for my actions. I have learned how to pray without ceasing. I have learned to allow God to do His work in my life. The greatest asset of this ministry is we live as a family; brothers and sister in Christ. We are spiritually responsible to one another.
- Member #7: I joined PLCC because this is a church that operates in excellence. The leader is spiritually strong and real. The leader values every member and prays for us all. I have learned accountability. I have learned to be faithful where I serve. I have also learned how to be a faithful giver. I

believe the PLCC family demonstrated we are responsible for the growth of each other; that is true spiritual accountability.

The next step in this model was to appoint leaders for the ministry. It is important that a growing church has individuals in place that can protect the ministry, led by example and demonstrate growth. A new ministry or church plant is similar to the assignment Moses was given by God to lead the children of God. One of the instructions that Moses learned was that he was not by himself. Jethro, Moses father-in-law, explained to Moses that he needed to appoint capable people manage the affairs of the group. Jethro basically told Moses that he would do more damage to himself and the church trying to do everything. In new church plants, many pastors have to do everything. In many situations, the pastor needs to be the Bible study teacher, accountant, strategist, visionary, computer tech, counselor, public speaker, worship director, prayer warrior, mentor, leadership trainer, and fundraiser. In order to avoid the pastor experiencing this kind of pressure, it is a necessity that the pastors appoint capable leaders and trust the leadership to deliver. However, leaders cannot be effective unless they know what their responsibilities are.

The leadership sessions that was conducted were an extension of the membership handbook. The leaders had to be familiar with and articulate the core strategies of the ministry and be committed to demonstrating the vision. Prior to the training they participated in pre-test to gage their understanding of leadership principles and the vision of the church. After the training was complete, a posttest was given to ensure the quality of learning. The researcher initiated this strategy to effectively implement accountability measures. By doing this nobody will have the excuse to say they did not know. After the post test was concluded the leaders acknowledged a PLCC Leadership Covenant.

The interviews and reviews were the last step of this Discipleship Model. This step required the pastor to spend one on one time with the ministry leader to give them candid feedback and access their results. In return the leader was able to speak freely about their involvement and experience of serving as a leader. The pastoral review concluded with the pastors giving the leader a few areas to focus on in the next year to better improve their leadership. The leaders received a rating from zero to three, with zero being the lowest and three being the highest.

The Discipleship Model—Analysis of Data

The researcher data outputs reflected significant increases in knowledge of the church core values and beliefs. The average score on the pre-test scores were in the sixty percentile. After collecting the data from the post-test, the leaders were all above 90%. Using this process in the Discipleship Model helps the pastor to confirm that the leaders have knowledge of what God gave the pastor so that the other lay members will have capable and trained leaders serving over the people.

The Discipleship Model—Outcome

In order to validate the previous step of this Discipleship Model was effective; the researcher shared the findings with the leaders through the process of interviews and reviews. After meeting with each leader, the participants and the author was able to confirm that all the leaders demonstrated the following:

- Knowledge of the expectations of a leader as outlined in the PLCC Leadership Covenant
- Knowledge of the expectation of the specific ministry assignment
- An understanding of the responsibility to help challenge the lay members to grow in the areas of ministry

- Learned to embrace others regardless
- Learned the importance of fulfilling the PLCC vision
- Embraced the feedback and spiritual assessment
- Committed themselves improving in the upcoming year

This field experience proved when members and leadership are held accountable they fulfill their spiritual responsibilities and demonstrate growth. This growth was measured by the increased number of individuals increased prayer life, commitment to ministry, constant involvement continued improvement. The people that joined PLCC, as seen in Appendix J, represent a diverse audience of individuals with previous ministry experience. This project determined by the implementation of this discipleship model, all the participants were able to effectively demonstrate spiritual responsibility. From the office of the pulpit all the way to the last seat, the PLCC members and leaders played a significant role in reversing the trends of irresponsible behavior.

PLCC is a ministry in which the vision is clear and the members are willing embrace the responsibility of fulfilling the assignment of ministry daily. The model is repeated for new members and new leaders. By repeating this process, the ministry is able to ensure when people join they enter a safe environment to grow, be challenged, be taught, and receive the Agape love of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTION, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSION

Reflection

When the author began the United Theological Seminary journey in January 2012, he had no idea what was about to take place. It was often shared by his mentors to trust the process. Hearing those words allowed the writer to dive-in head first into a life changing experience. The point of discovery for the author was during his first cohort peer session. He was asked to share his spiritual autobiography. After being moved to tears as a result of uncovering moments in his life he never reviewed, Doctor Donnell Moore asked the author why he was crying. It was at that moment the author revealed his passion to serve God completely and did not want to bring shame to the cross.

There were many people that failed the author. There were many people that represented the church that did not do what they promised. More importantly, the author reflected on the reality that he knew that failure was in his past genetically and was afraid he would fail. Doctor Moore explained to the author, “Remember that it was imperfect people that help you become who you are.” Hearing those words help the author to realize it was his time to execute the assignment of ministry God was calling him to. Every moment in the life of the author was about overcoming irresponsibility and being

accountable. The problem was initially revealed through the life of the author's father.

The solution and implementation of love was provided through the love taught by the author's mother. The brothers of the author held him accountable. It was very apparent that everything was lining up for the author to walk into a ministry of love and accountability to help change the lives of those who have experienced the failure of love. As the author looked to implement this project within the ministry of PLCC, he knew he had to be very strategic and transparent. Through the relationship of his cohorts, peer associates and professional associates, the author was given great feedback and suggestions on effectively outlining this Discipleship Model. Everything in which the author attempted to implement within this project did not work. There were some individuals that were not cooperative. There were some people that did not want to be challenged. However, the author remained patient and worked with all the participants.

The author noticed through dedication to the assignment and call that those that did not want to initially participate caught the vision and began to so increased interest daily. There were several key moments that the author reflects on that truly reflected success in this project. The first moment is shortly after the ministry of PLCC was launch; the author had an encounter with a young girl at the church that was very inspirational. After several months of engaging the congregation through methods of accountability and knowledge of vision, this young ten year-old girl wrote a message to the author. This message was not just in the typical form of a typed letter. This message was a hand written note on the back of a tithe and offering envelope. The message read, "I love my church!"

We are the place where imperfect people strive for God's perfect love! I am going to get saved next Sunday!" Sure enough, when the next Sunday came around, the little girl got up from her seat, and came to the altar to give the Lord her life. The message was clear, the author believed that God was telling him to stay the course and even children will receive the Word.

Another key moment in the development and implementation of this project discipleship model was the delivery of discipline to individuals. Even though God instructed the author to serve as a spiritual parent, this was uncomfortable at times. It reminded the author of the times his mother showed him love through physical discipline. In those moments, the author's mother would say, "I am only whipping you because I love you." While administering the whipping, the author would notice tears streaming down her face. This is the same feeling the author would get when disciplining the children of God. There were two moments in which the author had to remove two individuals from position in response to discipline. The author described it as the toughest decisions he ever had to make as a leader. However, in both situations love and accountability prevailed. Both individuals remained faithful in service.

While attempting to do God's work, one will always face opposition. That was no different for the author. In the middle of testing a particular series on the love of God, the enemy attacked the PLCC. As stated in Chapter One, PLCC's context is a senior community center that is often attended by Caucasian-Americans. When the author placed the church sign outside several attacks of opposition began to rise up against the ministry. Initially, the author was surprised. However, after time he realized these were satanic attacks to prevent the ministry from demonstrating the love of God in the

community. God spoke to the author and reminded him, under all circumstances to demonstrate love. This message truly came from God when the author came to worship one Sunday and the church sign have been racially damaged. When a report was filed with the City of Memphis, the author also learned there were several complaints filed on the church. The author never questioned God in this situation, but he trusted God. On the following week, there was a phone call that came from the City of Memphis. This particular phone call reminded the author to “keep doing what he was doing.” The city was acknowledging the acts of hate, but chose to side with love. Once again, God was showing the author this was the assignment.

The last point of reflection is the accountability that was demonstrated by those that were connected to the author during the Doctor of Ministry experience. The author was implementing a model that God was developing in him from the time of birth. Just like his life, there were many different challenges. In an effort to avoid the challenges, the author would not have done anything differently. However, the author would have like to use more people in his sample size at the church. The results support qualitative validity. The author would have to like to have known what others thought about the bible study. Even though he did not select more people to participate in the testimonials, the results demonstrated by the overall body satisfied and supported the results yielded.

This project was birthed through the life experiences of failed love versus successful love. The author identified the key God moments that took place in his life. This process created the reflection period that connected his past with his purpose. Every moment in his life somehow prepared him to step out and act on the assignment. Being a

part of the United Theological Seminary family assisted with the development of this work.

As the author reflected over the entire process, he realized it was by the design of God that led him to experience the things that he went through. The blessing is that the author knows that it is because of all the events that occurred in his life that shaped who God was designing him to minister to. The broken have a place in the ministry of PLCC. The abused have a place in the ministry of PLCC. The spiritually malnourished have a place in the ministry of PLCC. This love is helping to change the lives of many.

Summary

The summation of this project is the creation and development of a discipleship model that was built with the purpose of assisting new church plants grow spiritually. In order to avoid the recycle of people that go from church to church, the author implemented this process with careful research and delivery. History suggests in the city in which the author resides, if there is no strong model of discipleship for members they will eventually leave and be at the church down the street. The question that is answered is how do you keep people that have been hurt in the church? The author answers that question in this project.

When this project began the author was not exactly sure what direction God was leading him. One of the key moments that shaped the genesis of this project was the one thing that was missing from the life of the author—authority from the person in leadership. Missing the leader causes for the child to not have direction. This was a trend that needed to be broken. To reverse this irresponsible trend in the life of the author, the beginning of this project was initiated with that moment.

Once the author knew how the process of this project should begin, that is when things began to take shape. Considering the author was a new pastor starting a new church, the worst thing in the world would have been to proceed without the counsel of those that have too walked that path. The author was inspired to reach out to several pastors within the context of his city to ensure that that every step that he was taking was an appropriate step. This was not a common practice among the preachers and pastors that had an influence on the life of the pastor.

Many pastors did what they wanted to do, when they wanted to do it. As a result, the lack of accountability began to produce the clergy misconduct and neglect for God's children. Having felt that similar experience in his life; God placed an anointing on the author to help redirect the children of God in the right direction. The Case Study with the pastoral participants helped to keep the author grounded and focused. It was an amazing honor that the participants agreed and opened up in transparent dialogue about their life experiences. Since the author did not want to repeat the same flaws, he sat at the feet of teachers so the lesson was learned without needing experience to teach him.

Transitions contributed too many of the lessons of the author. It was critical to this process that there be a process of transition to help the author implement this project. When the author reflected on his life, it was when the transition occurred in his mind to stop view leadership in a traditional fashion that was when he connected the dots to the success in his life. Basically the author realized God can move anyway God chooses to move. The shift then occurred and the author remembered that it was the transition to respect his mother as the leader the lessons of life start pouring in.

The author's mother was a nurturer, provider, as disciplinarian and a teacher. His mother trained him. His mother raised him in the love of God. Those lifelong lessons reminded the author that this model had to be a demonstration of true love. It is when the love of God meets the right opportunity darkness is driven away by the light of Christ. The process of this model was all about the training, disciplining, raising, developing and loving the children of God. This process allowed for much training to occur. When the training took place the members held each other to striving for completion daily

The results were more than what the author suspected. He thought it would be successful, but not as good as it did. The participants in this project and the members of PLCC helped to show that when ministry is started right and implements a discipleship model that addresses the needs of the context according to the Word of God, it will be successful.

Conclusion

The goal of this project was to create a model that would change the lives of the people of God while healing them in the process. It was also the goal of the project to create a safe space for people to worship God in a loving environment that promoted accountability. This is what PLCC has gained over the course of the last two years. This project has revealed great success.

The transformation of PLCC took place early on in its existence. Once the ministry was in operation for a few months, it was apparent the author would need to ensure that the people were not just joining the church because it was the thing to do or because it was new. Immediately, the author implemented a process of training and spiritual reformation. PLCC could not be Church as usual. This discipleship model

created the ability for the children of God to understand they were a part of a family the supported spiritual growth. More importantly, the spiritual parent was going to lead by example.

The ministry of PLCC has grown from three people to 120 people. The church has taken in 136 people total. That means PLCC has retained nearly 90% of its members in its two years. The people are staying because they know their souls are being safe guarded. The people are learning accountability and taking ownership to the responsibility of spiritual growth. The ministry has difficult times like all, but the key to the success has been the demonstration of love. The people do not always agree. The people are not always in great moods. However, the point of accountability keeps the members reminded that the purpose of existence is not about the individual. The message is simple. It is about the love of God.

The people that are a part of this ministry are learning to understand that all people have a history of some failures. The failures in one's life could be attributed to sin or life itself. However, this ministry of PLCC is not about judging people. Instead this ministry is about building people. All ministries that exist to do the work of Christ have a universal goal to spread the love of God throughout the world. People should know that the body of Christ, the church, is a representation of Jesus Christ. Through the successful implementation of this model at PLCC, it is proof that it can be applied in other ministries throughout the earth.

PLCC headed toward continued healthy growth. As the author continues to implement this process model for the people that connect with the ministry, he believes

the results will continue to reflect spiritual and physical growth. Ministry leaders within the church are applying this same process within their groups.

Everyone is holding each other accountable. From the moment a new member joins the church, the new membership team immediately engages them. Next they are setting up meeting to connect the new member with a PLCC New Membership Handbook. After that point a gift assessment is conducted to place the individual in the right group. Lastly, the person is instructed to attend the new membership bible study series. After the series is complete, the new member can begin to serve in the area that meets their spiritual gifts. This is the point when the leaders of that ministry apply the same process of leadership and accountability to the members of their ministry. This model is successful because the new church implementing it can tailor it to fit their ministry. Once the process is implemented, watch the ministry experience healthy growth.

APPENDIX A
PLCC MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK



Membership Handbook

*Let all things be done decently and in order.
~ 1 Corinthians 14:40 ~*

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FROM THE DESK OF THE PASTOR



Greetings in the Name of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ:

WELCOME TO PLCC!!! I thank God for this opportunity to address you, the people of the most-high God. It is with great humility that I accepted the calling to organize and pastor the body of this ministry, Perfecting Love Community Church. This is a ministry that God has created with vision and purpose. Throughout my journey of life and ministry, God has been preparing me for this enormous assignment. It is with your prayers and support that this ministry will be all that God called it to be.

You will see in this document that this is a family ministry that has been created to minister to the complete man. Too often we see people just coming to church because it is the thing to do, thus producing an abundance of none spiritual religious people with no power. This is a ministry that will challenge its followers to excel in the gifts and anointing that God has blessed each of us with. We are a ministry that will make disciples of Jesus Christ.

As Members of The Church, Your Responsibilities Are:

- ❖ To desire to grow in the spirit. To be like Christ at all times.
- ❖ To love and share in the church's development and growth opportunities. This includes worship, Christian education, prayer, fasting and proclaiming the gospel. Your spiritual life source must be fed through the church.
- ❖ To show the Christian spirit in thought, work, and action (demonstrated by the spirit of LOVE).
- ❖ To pledge yourself to God. As a part God's church and fellowship, you should be faithful to the ministry of the church. The church was created and founded by God.
- ❖ To pray for the church, the pastor, and leadership of the church, and all the members of the "household of faith".
- ❖ To support your church with the giving of your time, gifts, finances, and substance.

As a Church, Our Responsibilities to You Are:

- ❖ To help you understand the Christian conversion experience.
- ❖ To help you learn and grow in the ways of God. To help you become a strong, active Christian through our worship experience, Bible study, prayer services, and community service.
- ❖ To care for you. To comfort and advise you. To share with you in difficult times.
- ❖ To guide and encourage you to live by the teachings of Jesus Christ.

I want to thank you for entrusting me to lead you in this 21st Century era. You could have chosen to place your membership and/or support in any other ministry. I encourage you to continue praying for me and this ministry. Begin to ask God what you can do to assist with the vision of this church. Words cannot express my gratitude towards the support you bring to this ministry. I look forward to serving you. We are a part of GOD's CHURCH.

In the Spirit of Perfect Love,

Pastor Jason

OUR HISTORY

In November 2007, while sitting in a classroom at Memphis Theological Seminary, Minister Jason Antwan Mitchell heard the Spirit of God speak “Perfecting Love.” Not knowing what this meant, he went into prayer and was led, by God, to read 1st John 4. While reading this particular passage of scripture, God began to reveal a new assignment to him. It was at this moment when God revealed the office “Pastor.” After he heard God speak these words, he did not receive this assignment. Due to the uncertainty of this vision and assignment, Minister Mitchell dismissed the notion that he would serve as a “Pastor.” Therefore, he continued to serve in his local ministry as Youth Minister and as an evangelist across the country.

In 2009, the Spirit of God began to remind him of the new assignment again. The words, “Perfecting Love” resurfaced. This time Elder Mitchell began to seek the face of God for confirmation, clarity, and direction. While consecrating himself before the Lord, God spoke a word of confirmation to Elder Mitchell that he would serve as an “End Time Pastor.” This was so overwhelming that Elder Mitchell became uncomfortable with the weight of this tremendous assignment. The reality of knowing the magnitude of the ministry in which God would birth out of him was very humbling. God then planted the seed of Perfecting Love Community Church. Elder Mitchell received impartation of this seed from God. The confirmation was given and the clarity was granted. The next step was direction.

In order to ensure that the birth of this ministry was successful, Elder Mitchell began to prepare the way for the Lord. The instructions from God were to “Write the vision and make it plain; so they that read it can understand it and run with it.” The most important message that came from God at this time was the vision is for an appointed time. This message was very vital to the establishment of this ministry because Elder Mitchell did not want to birth this ministry prematurely. Therefore, he continued to study under training and prepare himself for this great assignment. Without sharing this information with anyone other than his wife and close accountability partners, Elder Mitchell continued to study and prepare over the next two years.

In November of 2011, Elder Mitchell shared the vision and assignment with his Pastor (Overseer William Wright – Liberty COGIC & TN Southwest Fellowship). Following their conversation, Elder Mitchell received the blessing from his Pastor. Elder Mitchell informed Pastor Wright he would continue serving in the ministry until God called for him and his wife to begin this new assignment.

Perfecting Love Community Church is a ministry that is focused on Perfecting the Love of God in the people of God; Spirit, Soul & Body. The word Perfect in the Holy Bible comes from the Greek word Telios. This means to be Complete & Spiritually Mature. It is derived from the Greek word Telos. This means to set out for a definite point, or goal. The goal of this ministry is to ‘Minister to the Complete Man to Complete Man’. On January 1, 2012, Elder Jason A. Mitchell and his wife, Sharonda K. Mitchell, founded Perfecting Love Community Church, Inc. The first service is scheduled for February 12, 2012.

OUR PASTOR

Jason A. Mitchell is an anointed man of God that has a heart for God's people. General leadership skills were evident at an early age. This natural gift advanced into development as Pastor Jason assumed various roles throughout school such as Senior Class President (Hamilton High), West TN Vice President (Health Occupation Students of America), SGA President (LeMoyne-Owen College), Co-founder of Saved Apostles Living-Out Truth (S.A.L.T. Campus Ministry) and Beta Xi Chapter President (Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.). Little did he know that these leadership appointments were preparation for a greater assignment. He accepted the Call to Preach in the summer of 2003. Soon after the journey of ministry began, on September 19th, 2004, he preached his first sermon ("Will The Real Saints Please Stand Up") at Liberty Church of God in Christ. He was later licensed to preach on April 3rd, 2005 by Pastor William S. Wright and Ordained an Elder in the Church of God in Christ by Bishop Felton Smith on August 17th, 2009 during the 1st Ordination Class of the TN Southwest Fellowship Convocation. As a young man, God has opened many doors for Pastor Jason that has afforded him the opportunity to teach and preach for multiple denominations. Among those platforms; he has delivered the Word of God at Men's Conferences, Youth Workshops, Ministerial Trainings, Pastoral Anniversaries, Bible Studies, Revivals, and so much more. It is by the grace and favor of God that so many doors have opened in order for this young man to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pastor Jason is a goal oriented-visionary with many educational accomplishments. He earned his Bachelor's of Business Administration Management Degree from LeMoyne-Owen College. His first Master's Degree (Arts and Religion) came from Memphis Theological Seminary. The second Master's Degree (MBA) came from Dowling College in Oakdale, New York. Currently, Pastor Jason is working on a Doctor of Ministry Degree from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

As the Founder of Perfecting Love Community Church, Pastor Jason is dedicated to serving God's people the infallible written Word of God while remaining a man of Character, Values, Ethics, Integrity, and Humility. This Ministry will strive to help its members and all others impacted by the ministry to remain accountable to the purpose of God.

OUR FIRST LADY

Sharonda K. Mitchell is an anointed young woman of God that has a heart for people, especially kids and teenagers. Her journey in ministry began at the age of 4 when she sang her first solo; accompanied by her brother, Gary, at age 6. Since then, this uniquely gifted vocalist has developed into one of God's most gifted psalmist and songwriters. Lady Sharonda has traveled all over spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ through song in which she has been the featured guest at Women's Conferences, Revivals, Church Anniversaries, Pastoral Anniversaries, & Retreats. She has also had the great pleasure of working with some of the most gifted artists such as Lamar Campbell, Darwin Hobbs, and Sheri Jones-Moffett. It is no secret that Lady Sharonda's passion is Praise and Worship. She has served as the Praise and Worship Leader for Mississippi Blvd Christian Church, First Baptist Broad, and Liberty C.O.G.I.C. Youth Music Ministry. Lady Sharonda is very aware of the fact that it was nobody but God that has elevated her ministry.

Lady Sharonda is not only inspired and called by God spiritually, she is also qualified academically. With a Bachelor's Degree from LeMoyne-Owen College in Social Science (Minor in Psychology and Music) as well as a Master's Degree from the University of Phoenix in Business Administration (HRM); and completion of the Teacher Education Program at the University of Memphis, she is very well educated. "Learning is lifelong; and without training, skills go undeveloped," says Lady Sharonda. She has spent many years working for several non-profit agencies such as Agape Child and Family Services, Urban Youth Initiative, and Porter-Leath Children Center. In addition, she has also worked for Memphis City Schools as a 7th and 8th Educator. During her time in the classroom, it is no secret that her gifts and talents helped her obtain several awards and recognitions; including front cover article of "The Tennessean" (Nashville, TN ~ Newspaper). The experiences that Lady Sharonda has obtained through the years have helped her to demonstrate that with God all things are possible. She has been able to touch so many people both young and old by spreading the Word of God through her natural gift of fine arts.

THEME SCRIPTURE

“...If we love one another, God lives in us, and His love is PERFECTED in us.” - 1 John 4:12

VISION

Our Vision as imperfect people is to be transformed by the Perfect God; becoming empowered through the salvation of God & spreading God's Perfect Love to the communities of the world.

MISSION

Our Mission is to demonstrate the true Spirit of God's Love by restoring, developing, and completing all mankind through the infallible written Word of God in preparation for the second coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

VISION MOTTO

“Perfecting Love Community Church; The Place Where Imperfect People Strive For God’s Perfect Love”

3 POINT PILLARS OF PERFECTION (3P)

“Perfecting God’s Love In God’s People – Spirit, Soul & Body”

“Bible Based, Christ Centered, Family Focused”

“Ministering to the Complete Man to Complete Man”

VISION DESCRIPTION

“I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov’d. And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make [it] plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision [is] yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” – Habakkuk 2:1-3

Perfecting Love Community Church is a ministry that is focused on *Perfecting* the Love of God in the people of God; Spirit, Soul & Body. The word Perfect in the Holy Bible comes from the Greek word *Telios*. This means to be *Complete & Spiritually Mature*. It is derived from the Greek word *Telos*. This means to set out for a definite point, or goal. The goal of this ministry is to ‘*Minister to the Complete Man to Complete Man*’.

Love is arguably the most abused word in the world. In most cases, love is abused due to this lack of knowledge that people have pertaining love’s true meaning. While there are several forms of love, God’s love is described as AGAPE. This love, referred to as AGAPE, is well defined by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. Often times this form of selfless & unconditional love is confused with other forms of love. Other forms of love are Eros (Passionate Love), Philia (Friendship/Affectionate Love), and Storge (Natural Affection).

Eros love is form of love that focuses on the relationship between a male and female or husband and wife. Philia love is a form of love that focuses on the love shared by friends. Storge love is a form of love that is shared by family or relatives; more importantly between a parent and child.

Due to the misunderstanding of the various forms of love, people have associated and confused God’s love (AGAPE) with another form of Love. This ministry will focus on demonstrating the true spirit of God’s AGAPE love by restoring those abused by failed love, developing an overall understand of what God’s love means, and completing/maturing God’s people into disciples of Jesus Christ by sharing God’s Perfect Love to communities abroad.

DOCTRINAL ALLIANCE

Perfecting Love Community Church, Inc. is a Non-Denominational Ministry. The Constitution and By-Laws are based solely on the Holy Bible. All of the teachings and practices on PLCC, Inc. are derived from the scriptures in the Holy Bible and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

- ❖ Church Hierarchy & Leadership
 - God (Father, Son & Holy Spirit)
 - Elder Jason A. Mitchell, Pastor
 - Executive Board of Directors
 - Ministers / Deacons
 - Auxiliaries / Ministries

CHRISTIAN/CHURCH/ORGANIZATIONAL FELLOWSHIP

We support ALL Christian/Church/Organizational Fellowship with God fearing churches and organizations that acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who is the only way to God the father. Any such teachings that are contrary to this belief, we will NOT support.

FAMILY STATEMENT

Before the foundation of the church (Ekklesia) was ever established, God created family. We are in firm support of family unity and strength. Perfecting Love Community Church is a ministry designed to help develop its members in order for them to be effective in their homes and the community. This cannot be accomplished if we waste time on none-edifying church events and services. This ministry will take people in, restore them, build them, equip them, and send them out into the world to compel others to come in and experience this process.

CODE OF CONDUCT & CONFIDENTIALITY

The Executive Board of Directors of this church will enforce a strict Code of Conduct & Confidentiality policy for all its employees, leaders, and members to maintain the integrity and accountability of the ministry. The purpose of the Code of Conduct & Confidentiality policy is to outline the expectation of how all we must conduct ourselves within and outside of ministry to effectively accomplish the Vision and Mission of this church. Should any leader violate the Code of Conduct and Confidentiality policy, they will be subject to corrective actions which are not limited to termination and/or removal from their position. Removal from the Church will serve as a last resort if the party in violation refuses to complete a process of restoration. It is possible that a person in violation can be restored to a leadership position.

REIMBURSEMENTS

All purchases on behalf of Perfecting Love Community Church require requisition approval. If a member expects to be reimbursed for a purchase on behalf of the ministry, it is required that a requisition be submitted to the finance office and approved before the purchase is made. All requisitions must be submitted two weeks in advance of the expected time of the purchase. In the event that an emergency/necessary purchase is required; (a) it will not require 2 week approval, (b) it will require the override approval of the Pastor, CFO or a current Board of Director Member. All purchases made without submitting a requisition will be considered a seed sown into the ministry.

CHURCH STRUCTURE & LEADERSHIP

Executive Board of Directors

Jason A. Mitchell, Chairman
Sharonda K. Mitchell

Executive Board of Directors (Appointments):

- ❖ 1st Vice Chairman
- ❖ 2nd Vice Chairman
- ❖ Chief Financial Officer
- ❖ Executive Assistant
- ❖ Administrative Assistant
- ❖ Recording Secretary
- ❖ Recording Secretary

- *All Board of Trustee Members are appointed by the Pastor.*
- *The Board of Trustees shall never consist of more than 12 members.*
- *The responsibility of the Board of Trustees is to officiate and manage the business of the church.*

Deacon Board/Ministers

Deacon Appointments/Positions:

- ❖ Chairman
- ❖ Vice-Chairman

Ministerial Appointments/Positions:

- ❖ Assistant Pastor
- ❖ Youth Pastor

Auxiliary & Lay Member Leadership Appointments:

- ❖ President

- *All Deacon Board Members are appointed and licensed by the Pastor*
- *All Minister positions are appointed by the Pastor*
- *All Auxiliary president positions are appointed by the Pastor*
- *The is no set number of Deacon Board Members who can serve at one time*
- *The responsibility of the Deacon Board/Minister is to enforce the Church Constitution and Bylaws. The expectation of Deacon Board Members and Ministers is to provide support to the church leadership in order to fulfill the vision & mission of the Church.*



~The Pastor and Executive Board of Directors shall serve as the governing body for PLCC~

QUALIFICATIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Executive Board of Director - The Pastor shall establish an Executive Board of Directors. All Executive Board of Directors shall be good and faithful men/women who maintain the spirit of Christ and knowing that they are first called to serve the Lord Jesus Himself.

The expectations of the Executive Board of Perfecting Love Community Church:

- ❖ Strive to keep the disciplines of the Christian life, understanding that no one leads in faith who is not growing in faith. Lead and teach the church in a manner consistent with *The Bible and Church Constitution*
- ❖ Seek to make PLCC a Christ-focused spiritual home where all are invited and nurtured to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Have high expectations of myself and others and will work toward excellence in every area of ministry.
- ❖ Be both self-directed and accountable to others for my work. Be flexible and available.
- ❖ Take initiative and responsibility and, as a leader, work to build community within the church and among the staff. Seek to communicate with others clearly and regularly.
- ❖ Not entertain private, negative conversation about the pastor, other leaders, staff, or church.
- ❖ Speak the truth in love and will be honest with others about my questions, reservations, concerns, and ideas. Be professional, maintaining confidentiality and working toward unity; remembering always we are bound to one another through loyalty, respect, and mutual support.
- ❖ Have fun, remembering that joy is contagious and a clear sign of the new life offered in Jesus Christ.

Deacons

The Pastor shall establish a Ministry of Deacons. All Deacons shall be good and faithful men who maintain the spirit of Christ and knowing that they are called to serve the Lord Jesus Himself.

The expectations of the Deacons of Perfecting Love Community Church:

- ❖ Deacons must maintain a servant spirit to God and the Pastor as well as to the Deacon Ministry as unto the Lord. The Deacons must display loyalty and faithfulness to God and the Church. The Deacons shall demonstrate love and compassion for the members and the whole congregation. The expectation of Deacon is to provide support to the church leadership in order to fulfill the vision & mission of the Church.
- ❖ The principle duties of the Deacons consist in aiding the Pastor in the care of the congregation, support of church worship services, assisting in the administration of the ordinances of the church and providing relief, prayer, and encouragement to the poor and suffering.

Lay Leaders

The Pastor shall establish ministries and auxiliaries that require Lay Leaders. Other leadership positions can be created by the Pastor base on the need of the ministry. The Ministries and Auxiliaries of PLCC are:

Active Ministries:

Christian Education (Sunday School, Bible Study, Summits/Conferences)

Ministerial Alliance (Elders, Evangelists, Ministers)

Deacon Board

Music

Men

Women

Youth & Young Adults (13-35)

Children (0-12)

Couples

Singles

Ushers/Greeters

Active Auxiliaries:

Evangelism & Community Service Outreach

Health & Fitness/Recreation

Economic Empowerment

R.A.D.I.C.A.L. (Recovering Addicts Delivered In Christ Abundantly Living)

M.D. (Ministry Development)

Hospitality/Culinary Arts

- ❖ Each lay leader commits to attending worship services and bible study regularly.
- ❖ Each lay leader affirms the importance of directly addressing concerns with the pastor and initiating face to face conversation rather than allowing issues to develop and/or persist.
- ❖ Each lay leader will embrace the overall vision of the church for projects, ministries, and goals.
- ❖ Each lay leader will willingly shoulder responsibility for decisions made by the committee.
- ❖ Each lay leader will stand in solidarity with the other leaders of the Executive Committee creating a united front, in order to breed trust and confidence within the congregation.
- ❖ Each lay leader will attend at least one leadership training event each year and will willingly engage in reading materials that will foster new/deeper leadership skills and abilities.

Qualifications of All Leaders:

The Pastor shall appoint candidates for the office of Executive Board, Deacon, and Lay Leaders. To serve in either capacity a person must be a member in good standing. All leadership appointments are yearly. If his/her health or other circumstances do not permit him/her to continue to serve, then after counsel with the Pastor, he/she is to be placed on Inactive Leadership Status. He/she shall, however, maintain the spiritual and moral standards of the office (II Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-7; Exodus 18:21-27; Numbers 11:16-17). A leader must regularly attend Worship Service & Bible Study, faithful in tithes and offerings, and committed to fasting and

praying for their individual growth. He/she will be a faithful and a loyal supporter of the entire Church. If the leader does not maintain the spiritual and moral standards of the office or if he/she chooses to step down, he/she will no longer serve in that capacity.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership Intake, Removal, Transferals are official through the approval of the Pastor. In the event that the Pastor is absent from the church and there is a candidate or candidates for intake, the person that is left in charge to officiate the service will have the authority to 'Open the Doors' of the Church and accept the candidate for membership into the body. However, it is only at the return of the Pastor can membership be made official by extending the 'Embrace of Fellowship'. Removal and Transferring of membership can only be conducted by the Pastor.

After making the public declaration of your request to become a member of Perfecting Love Community Church, it is the requirement of each candidate for membership to be received into the ministry by the Pastor or designee. Upon uniting with Perfecting Love Community Church, a new member is required to complete a new member form and attend the new member's orientation class. Regardless of how long you have been a part of the Body of Christ, the new member's orientation class is a requirement.

If a member has not been consistent in attendance, contributions, and ministry participation for a (6) month period, he/she is considered as an inactive member. After (12) months, he/she is no longer considered as a member. It is at that time the member will be removed from the church's database. Should this be the case, the member will be notified by the contact information provided. Inactive or former members can be restored to membership by the approval of the Pastor.

CHRISTIAN BELIEFS & FAITH STATEMENTS

The Bible - We believe that the Bible is the Word of God and contains one harmonious and sufficiently complete system of doctrine. We believe in the full inspiration of the Word of God. We hold the Word of God to be the only authority in all matters and assert that no doctrine can be true or essential, if it does not find a place in this Word. The Word of God is infallible.

God (Father) - We believe in God, the Father Almighty, the Author and Creator of all things. The Old Testament reveals God in diverse manners, by manifesting his nature, character, and dominions. The Gospels in the New Testament give us knowledge of God the "Father" or "My Father", showing the relationship of God to Jesus as Father, or representing Him as the Father in the Godhead, and Jesus himself that Son (St. John 15:8, 14:20). Jesus also gives God the distinction of "Fatherhood" to all believers when he explains God in the light of "Your Father in Heaven" (St. Matthew 6:8).

God (Son) - We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Second person in the Godhead of the Trinity or Triune Godhead. We believe that Jesus was and is eternal in his person and nature as the Son of God who was with God in the beginning of creation (St. John 1:1). We believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin called Mary according to the scripture (St. Matthew 1:18), thus giving rise to our fundamental belief in the Virgin Birth and to all of the miraculous events surrounding the phenomenon (St. Matthew 1:18-25). We believe that Jesus Christ became the "suffering servant" to man; this suffering servant came seeking to redeem man from sin and to reconcile him back to God, his Father (Romans 5:10). We believe that Jesus Christ is standing now as mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2:5)

God (Holy Spirit) - We believe the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, proceeds from the Father and the Son, is of the same substance, equal to power and glory, and is together with the Father and the Son, to be believed in, obeyed, and worshipped. The Holy Ghost is a gift bestowed upon the believer for the purpose of equipping and empowering the believer, making him a more effective witness for service in the world. He teaches and guides one into all truth (John 16:13; Acts 1:8, 8:39).

Baptism of the Holy Spirit - We believe that the Baptism of the Holy Ghost is an experience subsequent to conversion and sanctification of the baptism in the Holy Ghost with the manifestations of the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Acts 10:46, 19:1-6). We believe that we are not baptized with the Holy Ghost in order to be saved (Acts 19:1-6; John 3:5). When one receives a baptismal Holy Ghost experience, we believe one will produce fruit of the spirit, not limited to speaking with a tongue unknown to oneself according to the sovereign will of Christ. To be filled with the Spirit means to be Spirit controlled as expressed by Paul in Ephesians 5:18-19. We believe that a Holy Ghost experience is mandatory for all men today.

Salvation – We believe salvation deals with the application of the work of redemption to the sinner with his restoration to divine favor and communion with God. This redemptive operation of the Holy Ghost upon sinners is brought about by repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ which brings conversion, faith, justification regeneration, sanctification, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Repentance is the work of God, which results in a change of mind in respect to man's relationship to God. (St. Matthew 3:1-2, 4:17; Acts 20:21). Faith is a certain conviction wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, as to the truth of the Gospel and a heart trust in the promises of God in Christ (Romans 1:17, 3:28; St. Matthew 9:22; Acts 26:18). Conversion is that act of God whereby He causes the regenerated sinner, in his conscious life, to turn to Him in repentance and faith (II Kings 5:15; II Chronicles 33:12-13; St. Luke 19:8, 9; Acts 8:30). Regeneration is that act of God by which the principle of the new life is implanted in man, and the governing disposition of soul is made holy and the first holy exercise of this new disposition is secured. Sanctification is that gracious and continuous operation of the Holy Ghost, by which He delivers the justified sinner from the pollution of sin, renews his whole nature in the image of God and enables him to perform good works (Romans 6:4;5:6; Colossians 2:12; 3:1).

Sin – We believe sin is attributed to Satan (Isaiah 14:12-20), and is transmitted into the blood of the human race through disobedience and deception motivated by unbelief (I Timothy 2:14). Adam's sin, committed by eating of the forbidden fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, carried with it permanent pollution or depraved human nature to all his descendants. This is called "original sin." Sin can now be defined as a volitional transgression against God and a lack of conformity to the will of God. We, therefore, conclude that man by nature, is sinful and that he has fallen from a glorious and righteous state from which he was created, and has become unrighteous and unholy. Man, therefore, must be restored to his state of holiness from which he has fallen by being born again (St. John 3:7).

Church - The Church forms a spiritual unity of which Christ is the divine head. It is animated by one Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. It professes one faith, shares one hope, and serves one King. It is the citadel of the truth and God's agency for communicating to believers all spiritual blessings. The Church then is the object of our faith rather than of knowledge. The word "CHURCH" or "EKKLESIA" was first applied to the Christian society by Jesus Christ in St. Matthew 16:18, the occasion being that of his benediction of Peter at Caesarea Philippi.

Healing – We believe in and practice Divine Healing. It is a commandment of Jesus to the Apostles (St. Mark 16:18). Jesus affirms his teachings on healing by explaining to His disciples, who were to be Apostles, that healing the afflicted is by faith (St. Luke 9:40-41). Therefore, we believe that healing by faith in God has scriptural support and ordained

authority. St. James' writings in his epistle encourage Elders to pray for the sick, lay hands upon them and to anoint them with oil, and that prayers with faith shall heal the sick and the Lord shall raise them up.

Miracles – We believe that miracles occur to convince mankind that the Bible is God's Word. A miracle can be defined as an extraordinary visible act of Divine power, wrought by the efficient agency of the will of God, which has as its final cause the vindication of the righteousness of God's word. We believe that the works of God, which were performed during the beginnings of Christianity, do and will occur even today where God is preached, Faith in Christ is exercised, The Holy Ghost is active, and the Gospel is promulgated in the truth (Acts 5:15; 6:8; 9:40; Luke 4:36, 7:14-15; 5:5-6; St. Mark 14:15).

Angels - The Bible uses the term "angel" (a heavenly body) clearly and primarily to denote messengers or ambassadors of God with such scripture references as Revelations 4:5, which indicates their duty in heaven to praise God (Psalm 103:20), to do God's will (St. Matthew 18:10) and to behold his face. But since heaven must come down to earth, they also have a mission to earth. The Bible indicates that they accompanied God in the Creation, and also that they will accompany Christ in His return in Glory.

Demons - Demons denote unclean or evil spirits; they are sometimes called devils or demonic beings. They are evil spirits, belonging to the unseen or spiritual realm, embodied in human beings. The Old Testament refers to the prince of demons, sometimes called Satan (Adversary) or Devil, as having power and wisdom, taking the habitation of other forms such as the serpent (Genesis 3:1). The New Testament speaks of the Devil as Tempter (St. Matthew 4:3) and it goes on to tell the works of Satan, The Devil, and Demons as combating righteousness and good in any form, proving to be an adversary to the saints. Their chief power is exercised to destroy the mission of Jesus Christ. It can well be said that the Christian Church believes in Demons, Satan, and Devils. We believe in their power and purpose. We believe they can be subdued and conquered as in the commandment to the believer by Jesus. "In my name they shall cast out Satan and the work of the Devil and to resist him and then he will flee (WITHDRAW) from you." (St. Mark 16:17).

Future - We believe that the next great event in human history will be the return of Jesus Christ for his children. This is the blessed hope for all followers of Jesus Christ. While this event is a prophetic truth of Scripture, we acknowledge that the point of Christ's return is not for the believer to passively await this event, but to labor with all of our might in the power of the Spirit to fulfill his will in our lives through righteous living, evangelism and discipleship. After the return of Christ those who accepted God's gracious gift of salvation will worship God forever in heaven. Those who did not will spend an eternity separated from Him in hell. (Matthew 24:36; I Thessalonians 4:15-17; John 14:1-3; Matthew 24-25). We believe the future is described as the second coming of Christ; that He shall come from heaven to earth, personally, bodily, visibly (Acts 1:11; Titus 2:11-13; St. Matthew 16:27; 24:30; 25:30; Luke 21:27; John 1:14, 17; Titus 2:11) and that the Church, the bride, will be caught up to meet Him in the air (I Thessalonians, 4:16-17).

Justification- We believe the Scriptures teach that the great Gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; by virtue of which faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

Repentance and Faith- We believe the Scriptures teach that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition,

confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our prophet, priest and king, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior. We believe that the only means of being cleansed from sin is through repentance and faith in the precious Blood of Jesus Christ.

Civil Government- We believe the Scriptures teach that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interest and good order of human society; and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.

FINANCIAL GIVING

WHAT IS TITHING?

The tithe is God's plan, along with an offering, for the support of God's work. The tithe is 10% of your earnings. In Malachi 3:8-10, God tells us that if we tithe, He will bless us in an overwhelming way. Tithing is essential for the church and for the prosperity of the believer.

When a Christian tithes, he honors God. Man, in tithing, is recognizing that God is the Owner, and man is the steward who holds God's property in trust. Proverbs says, "Honor the Lord with thy substance."

The Christian tithes because he knows that God has seen fit to make His work dependent on His people. God is a great giver; the man who wants to be like Him must understand that nothing will help a Christian so much to establish a habit of giving as will the tithing principle.

WHY TITHE?

- ❖ This is the primary financial means in which the Church operates.
- ❖ The Bible directs us to do this: Malachi 3:10, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house..... saith the Lord of Hosts..."
- ❖ God Blesses the Tither: Malachi 3:10, "I will open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

IS THE TITHE ALL THAT ONE SHOULD GIVE?

The tithe is the minimum that one should give to the church for support, but That Is Not All That One Should Give. I Corinthians 16:2, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." This was an appeal to help the Mother Church at Jerusalem. For Mission and Education, we are called upon to "give as God has prospered us." In addition to the tithe, we are required to give an offering. According to 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, giving sacrificial offerings should be inspired by **God** so that the giver can share the gift cheerfully and not grudgingly or of necessity. The giver should seek God for the additional offering to give.

WHAT IS THE MONEY USED FOR?

All funds that are collected by PLCC are used for the advancement of the gospel of Jesus Christ through Charitable Donations, Benevolence, Community Development, Christian Development, and Funding the Church Budget. The Church Budget includes Rent/Mortgage, Supplies, Ministerial Honorariums, etc.

All giving is considered charitable contributions. On the first Sunday of each new calendar year, members and contributors will receive a donation statement for their records. A 'Contributor' is defined as a non-member that has giving a substantial amount during the previous calendar year.

BASIC CHURCH ETIQUETTE / PROTOCOL

The Church is the House of God. Church etiquette and protocol is an attitude with the ultimate goal of demonstrating poise, grace, respect and consideration of God.

What Do You Do When?

- ❖ Prayer & Reading of Holy Scripture? **Stand** (NO Walking)
- ❖ Praise & Worship? **Stand**
- ❖ There is a death in the family? Contact the Pastor or an Executive Board Member.
- ❖ You are suffering a financial hardship? Contact the Pastor or an Executive Board Member.
- ❖ If you have a prayer request? Contact the Pastor or the Director of Evangelism.
- ❖ You simply want to talk to your Pastor about a matter of concern? Contact the Pastor via email at perfectinglovepastor@gmail.com.
- ❖ There is someone sick or has been admitted to the hospital? Contact the Pastor or the Director of Evangelism.
- ❖ You want to become a part of a particular ministry? Talk to the ministry leader.
- ❖ You want to get married? Contact the Pastor or an Executive Board Member.

BIBLE OVERVIEW

THE OLD TESTAMENT

There are 39 books in the Old Testament, generally separated into 4 divisions:

The Pentateuch are the books of Moses (5): Genesis - Deuteronomy

Historical Books (12): Joshua - Esther.

Poetical Books (5): Job - Song of Solomon.

Prophetical Books (5 Major / 12 Minor): Isaiah - Malachi.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

There are 27 books in the New Testament, generally separated into 4 divisions:

The Gospels (4): Matthew - John

Historical Books (1): Acts

Doctrinal/Epistles Books (21): Romans - Hebrews

Prophetical Book (1): Revelation

APPENDIX B
BIBLE STUDY TESTIMONIAL



Perfecting Love Community Church

Testimonial

Before joining PLCC, were you a member of another Church? If Yes, how long?

Why did you join PLCC?

What are three things you have learned since you have been a Member of PLCC?

What is your definition and take on Spiritual Accountability?

What is your definition of Spiritual Parenthood?

What were your overall takeaways from the New Membership Bible Study Series?

Thank you for participating in this testimonial questionnaire. Please do NOT include your name on this questionnaire. All information gathered in this exercise is completely confidential and used for the sole purpose of research being conducted by Pastor Jason Mitchell for the completion of the Doctor of Ministry Degree at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, OH.

APPENDIX C
LEADERSHIP COVENANTS



Perfecting Love Community Church

Leadership Covenant

The following are leadership principles for those who are called to be a leader of or in a ministry area and who accept that calling. Leaders are to be role models so the expectations are high. These are biblical principles set out to help you be effective as possible in leading people to pursue and cultivate a relationship in Jesus Christ.

As a leader in ministry at Perfecting Love Community Church, I profess my sole faith in Jesus Christ as my Savior and I commit myself to following:

- ❖ To live a lifestyle that is Christ-like. To genuinely loving, caring, respectful and concerned about God's people and creation.
- ❖ To strive to fulfill the two greatest commandments: (Mathew 22:37-40) To love God with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love others as I love myself.
- ❖ To make worship a holy habit-participating unless sick or out of town.
- ❖ To be a person of prayer. To realize that prayer is a skill and like any skill it requires time and diligence to develop. I commit to pray for my community, my church, my pastor, my family, and the un-churched.
- ❖ To grow in my faith is at least one way besides worship each year-through Sunday School, Bible Study, or a ministry group of some sort.
- ❖ To diligently fulfill my role as a servant leader by understanding my ministry description and enthusiastically leading people to pursue and cultivate a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- ❖ To make tithing & offering a spiritual discipline. I faithfully give 10% of my income. I faithfully work toward this goal.
- ❖ To refrain from any action or activity that may hamper my ministry or serve as a negative role model to believers and unbelievers.

I understand these Leadership Principles, and through the grace of God, I am willing to commit myself to them.

Print _____ Date _____

Sign _____

Perfecting Love Community Church Leadership Expectations

Pastoral Expectations

- ❖ The pastor demonstrate a Christian life of accountability and character by fasting, praying, studying, leading, and feeding the congregation the infallible written *Word of God* in LOVE.
- ❖ The pastor will be faithful in giving of his time, talent, substance and financial resources (Tithe & Offerings).
- ❖ The pastor will work with the Executive Board of Directors to effectively manage the business of the church.
- ❖ During each Executive Committee meeting the pastor will account for his focus, ministry, and goal accomplishments for the ministry.
- ❖ The pastor will ask for feedback and input after giving his Executive Committee report as a way of collaboratively working with the lay leaders in leading the congregation to fulfill its vision and mission
- ❖ The pastor will actively communicate with Executive Committee and the congregation on new activities, events, and ministry developments in order to breed trust and confidence within the whole body of Christ.
- ❖ The expectation of the pastor is also inclusive of the expectations of all other ministry leaders.

Executive Board of Directors Expectations

- ❖ Will strive to keep the disciplines of the Christian life, understanding that no one leads in faith who is not growing in faith.
- ❖ Will lead and teach the church in a manner consistent with *Word of God*.
- ❖ Will seek to make Perfecting Love Community Church a Christ-focused spiritual home where all are invited and nurtured to be disciples of Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Will have high expectations of myself and others and will work toward excellence in every area of ministry.
- ❖ Will balance the church's needs for ministry with my own Spiritual needs.
- ❖ Will be both self-directed and accountable to others for my work.
- ❖ Will be flexible and available.
- ❖ Will take initiative and responsibility in working to build community within the church and among the staff.
- ❖ Will seek to communicate with others clearly and regularly.
- ❖ Will pray for and support the pastor.
- ❖ Will not entertain private, negative conversation about the pastor, other leaders, staff, or the church.
- ❖ Will speak the truth in love and will be honest with others about my questions, reservations, concerns, and ideas.
- ❖ Will be professional, keeping confidences and working toward unity-remembering always we are bound to one another through loyalty, respect, and mutual support.
- ❖ Will recognize that failure is okay, failing to try is not okay.
- ❖ Will have fun, remembering that joy is contagious and a clear sign of the new life offered in Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Each lay leader affirms the importance of directly addressing concerns with the pastor and initiating face to face conversation rather than allowing issues to continue.

- ❖ Each lay leader will embrace co-responsibility with the pastor for projects, ministries, goals, and the overall vision of the church.
- ❖ Each lay leader will willingly shoulder responsibility for decisions made by the committee.
- ❖ Each lay leader will stand in solidarity with the other leaders of the Executive Board creating a united front, in order to breed trust and confidence within the congregation.
- ❖ Each lay leader will attend at least one leadership training event each year and will willingly engage in reading materials that will foster new/deeper leadership skills and abilities.
- ❖ Each leader will be faithful in giving his/her time, talent, substance and financial resources (Tithe & Offerings).

Print Name

Signature

Date

APPENDIX D
MINISTRY DESCRIPTIONS



Perfecting Love Community Church

Ministry Description

POSITION: Director of Marketing

SUMMARY:

Director of Marketing is in charge of PLCC's marketing efforts and strategies. This consists of Website design and development, media management, promotional advertising. Director of Marketing will seek to discover effective ways to promote the Vision and Mission PLCC to the public.

LEADERSHIP:

Leads the development and implementation of organizational marketing goals in relation to need and available resources while following the vision and mission of the PLCC. The Director of Marketing will be responsible for the following:

- Work with the Executive Assistant to understand the budget for marketing efforts.
- Maintain the Church Website.
- Lead the Media Team in providing service through Power Point Presentations, Videography and Photography.
- Develops and recommends annual Marketing goals to Pastor and Executive Board of Directors.
- Comply with the Leadership Covenant of PLCC.

I commit to serving in this ministry of Marketing at PLCC. I understand these Leadership Principles, and through the grace of God, I am willing to commit myself to them.

Print _____ Date _____

Senior Pastor _____

Sign _____

APPENDIX E
LEADERSHIP REVIEWS

Perfecting Love Community Church

2013 Ministry Evaluation & Review

POSITION: Director of Marketing – XXXXX XXXXXXXX

SUMMARY:

Director of Marketing is in charge of PLCC's marketing efforts and strategies. This consists of Website design and development, media management, promotional advertising. Director of Marketing will seek to discover effective ways to promote the Vision and Mission PLCC to the public.

LEADERSHIP:

The following is an evaluation and review of the 2013 calendar year. Each area is rated in the following 3 categories (Exceeded Expectations= EE, Meets Expectations=ME, Needs Improvement=NI)

- Work with the Executive Assistant to understand the budget for marketing efforts.
ME=2
- Maintain the Church Website & Social Media.
ME=2
- Lead the Media Team in providing service through Power Point Presentations, Videography and Photography.
NI=1
- Develops and recommends annual Marketing goals to Pastor and Executive Board of Directors.
NI=1
- Develop creative designs for marketing material
EE=3
- Comply with the Leadership Covenant of PLCC.
ME=2

Overall Rating: 1.8 out of 3 = ME (Meets Expectations)

Comments:

XXXXXXX, this has been a very good year. Your creativity is a strong CHRIST-like characteristic. This is a gift that must be developed and put on display. With the help of God I truly believe your work will serve as strong tool of growth for PLCC. This simply means that your work is needed. I want to see you take the necessary steps to grow this ministry to the great levels. The areas you should focus on this year include expanding your resources (new volunteers in your department) and time management. This will help you balance the load that you carry to prevent burnout. As the ministry grows, so will you. Be blessed and continue to let God use you.

I understand this review is to help me grow and serve better in ministry. Through the grace of God, I am willing to commit myself to applying the feedback provided in an effort to grow the ministry and to grow personally.

Print _____ Date _____ Senior Pastor _____

Sign _____

APPENDIX F
LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW

Perfecting Love Community Church

2013 Ministry Interview

POSITION: XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

NAME – XXXXX XXXXXXXXX

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this interview is to give each ministry leader an opportunity to reflect on the past year of service in ministry and to assess your own ministry effectiveness. This also gives the ministry leader the chance to express areas of concerns and improvement. It is requested that the ministry leader respond candidly so that PLCC can plan to collaboratively implement solutions that promote growth. This interview questionnaire is for the leadership review meeting that will be conducted with Pastor Jason Mitchell.

QUESTIONS:

1. On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate yourself on your overall leadership this past year. _____

2. Name the top 3 areas your ministry should improve.

3. Name the top 3 areas your ministry excelled.

4. How have you grown spiritually?

5. Do you feel you get the support you need to be successful? If not, please explain.

6. What have been your biggest challenges this year?

7. What additional comments would you like to share?

APPENDIX G
PASTORAL CASE STUDY

Perfecting Love Community Church

Voluntary Pastoral Case Study

SUMMARY:

The purpose of this case study is to assist Pastor Jason Mitchell in the launch of the Perfecting Love Community Church. You have been selected to be a participant in this case study because you are a current senior pastor of a church plant or a former senior pastor of a church plant. If you choose to participate, please answer the following questions and return them to address XXXXXXXX. It is also requested that you do not place your name on this document unless you choose to do so. Please note that your information and responses will remain confidential. There is also a participant waiver attached to this document. This waiver also provides Pastor Jason consent to use the data for the purpose of this research. Thank you in advance for your participation.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did you plant your church?
2. Did you have the assistance of a parent church?
3. How many members do you have currently?
4. Explain your stance on Theological training?
5. How many people did you start with?
6. What challenges did you face when you first planted your ministry?
7. Summarize official document of church statutes that govern your ministry?
8. How do you know the members know what is expected from them?
9. How do you fill your leadership positions filled?
10. Explain ways your ministry leaders know what is expected of them?
11. How do you know if your members know the vision of the church?
12. Describe how denominational allegiance impacts your ministry?
13. What is the pastoral process of accountability?
14. If you have ever been involved in clergy misconduct (infidelity, theft, etc.), what do you think was the reason?
15. Describe the top three reasons that contributed to your ministry success?
16. What is your definition of spiritual parenting?
17. Describe the relationship between you and your spiritual parent/pastor?
18. What is the difference between 'Church' and 'Family'?
19. How do you measure spiritual growth?
20. What is your position on church discipline?

Please add any addition feedback you would like to share with the researcher:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

APPENDIX H
Pre and Post Test Questionnaires

Perfecting Love Community Church

Leadership Test

Name: _____

Position: _____

Instructions: Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. This test will be administered before the and after the training to verify the leader's knowledge of the subject matter. As a leader of the church, it is important that you are able to demonstrate knowledge and the ability to effectively lead the people of God within the ministry of PLCC. This is an independent assessment in which you may not use the aid of any other tool or person to answer these questions. After the test is administered at the end of training, there will be a review and comparison of scores to verify increased knowledge.

1. What is the Vision of PLCC?
2. What is the Mission of PLCC?
3. What is the overall expectation of each ministry and auxiliary?
4. Define Agape?
5. What is the definition of a Christian leader?
6. Why should you be held accountable?
7. What constitutes membership at PLCC?
8. What two forms must each leader acknowledge?
9. What is the leadership structure of PLCC?
10. List 5 requirements of ministry leader of PLCC?

APPENDIX I
PARTICIPANTS WAIVER

Perfecting Love Community Church

Participant Consent Form Research Project

INSTITUTION: United Theological Seminary

NAME OF RESEARCHER: Jason A. Mitchell

LOCATION OF PROJECT: Perfecting Love Community Church

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH: This is a voluntary study being conducted in an effort to build an effective discipleship model for new church plants. Perfecting Love Community is a new church plant in the city of Memphis. The goal of the researcher is to test the model using the data collected through the participation of several volunteers. The participation of all volunteers will help the researcher to construct this model that will help prevent the church from be a revolving door that loses people to the irresponsible behaviors of the people of the church. This discipleship model will focus on spiritual formation.

RISK INHERENT IN THE PROCEDURES: Participants will be asked to give their honest opinion at all times based upon their experiences as well as others who have shared experiences with them that may pertain to this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Questionnaires, case studies, testimonials and interviews will be kept in confidence by the researcher and every attempt to maintain anonymity will be observed in documenting this data. However, information shared within the Bible study groups may not be kept confidential by other participants although requested to do so.

PARTICIPATION: I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary. If I decide to participate in the study, I may withdraw my consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

I have read and understand the information stated and willingly sign this consent form.

Name

Signature

Date

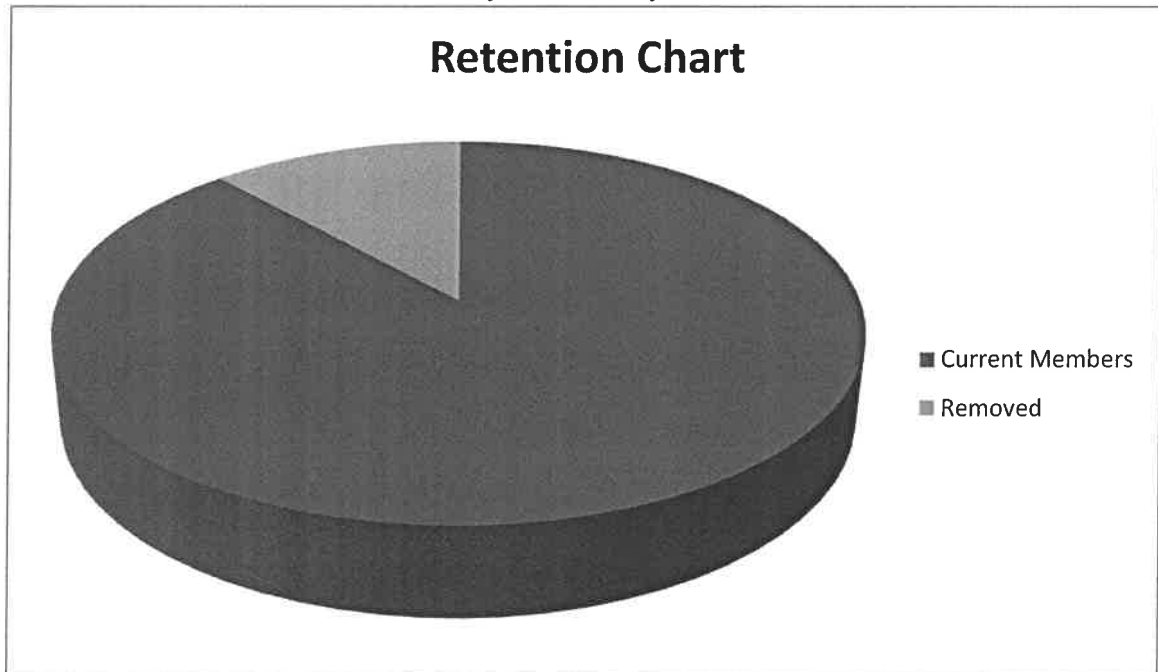
Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX J
MEMBERSHIP CHART

PLCC 2014 Membership Chart

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Facts:

- PLCC updates the membership roster quarterly
- Members that are not active physically and/or financially after a certain period of time are removed from the roster. All persons that are removed from the roster are notified
- After 2 years, PLCC has grown to 120 ACTIVE Members
- 9 out of every 10 people that join PLCC remain active members of PLCC

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